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Telling the Story: Interpretation and Orientation



OVERVIEW

Two hundred years since its construction was first proposed, and fully a century after its commercial and economic preeminence was largely overtaken by other transportation modes, the Erie Canal today retains genuine national significance. More than a triumph of engineering and construction, more than an engine of development and prosperity, more than a monument to political will and power, the Erie Canal endures as an idea. The Erie Canal, and the New York State Canal System of which it is the centerpiece, stand as powerful symbols of American determination, ingenuity, and capability, and of the commitment to geographical, economic, social, and cultural integration that fundamentally informs the national character. At the same time, settlement subsequent to the construction of the canals posed great hardships to pre-existing Native American society – an indelible part of the national story.

Throughout the Corridor, powerful physical resources provide a perfect setting for engaging visitors in considering compelling stories and themes. These include natural features of geography and topography that dramatically illustrate both the original need for the canals and the obstacles that the system's designers and builders faced; cultural features, including living canal communities and the folkways and other artistic expressions they sustain; historical features, primarily historical landscapes, that offer tangible evidence of the system's evolution dating back to its earliest stages; and contemporary features, including the active operations and facilities of the Barge Canal. Indeed, one of the most compelling aspects of the Corridor for visitors is that its signature resource – the canal system – provides a living link not only across distance but through time, a splendid symbol of evolution and adaptation to change.

Photo:
Packet's Landing, Fairport

Erie Canalway
National Heritage Corridor
Preservation and Management Plan

The canal system provides a living link not only across distance but through time.

Linking the 234 municipalities, the more than 200 years of canal-related history, and the countless resources of this large region requires a multi-disciplinary effort. Interpretation is needed to engage and inform diverse audiences and provide a contextual “umbrella” connecting local stories to a larger sense of shared history. Education is needed to deepen and broaden understanding and develop constituencies for preservation and conservation. Wayfinding is needed to facilitate the arrival, orientation, and movement of people in order to maximize opportunities for exposure to resources in their historic and natural settings. Taken together, these efforts can build a unifying identity for the Corridor, and a level of recognition among both visitors and residents that they are participants in a unique and continuing living history.

From an interpretive, educational, and orientation perspective, the overarching goal of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is to enable a vibrant, engaging, dynamic, and satisfying user experience across the entire length of the Corridor. Future visitors to the region should encounter evidence of this effort at every turn. As a 21st century effort, interpretation of the Corridor story and orientation to its vast area and wide range of resources must make use of modern technology as well as traditional publications and “on the ground” exhibits and programs. Today’s diverse and mobile visitors increasingly rely on the internet to learn about potential destinations and plan trips, make spontaneous decisions about itineraries, and make use of cellphones and portable computers with wireless internet access as well as the networked resources available at some rest stops, museums, libraries and visitor centers.

Significantly, many of the obstacles confronting efforts to improve interpretation and orientation in the Corridor are also among the Corridor’s most engaging qualities: the wide array of interrelated interpretive subjects represented across the region; the broad range of independent but conceptually connected features and resources; strong regional and local identities and a tendency toward local focus; a great diversity of settings along hundreds of miles of navigable waterways; a highly porous transportation network with many access points and modes of travel; and a variety of existing interpretive assets and media of widely varying character, style, quality, and effectiveness.

To succeed, the Commission and its partners must transform these obstacles into opportunities, integrating the region’s geographical, political, economic, and cultural complexity into the valuable asset that it is truly capable of becoming. Historical linkages among Corridor sites and communities will be restored through the presentation of interconnected “Corridor-wide” themes and storylines at locations throughout the Corridor, using a variety of media and methodologies appropriate to each setting. The national significance of the canals will serve as a kind of melody line, while individual local and regional stories will provide vital harmonies and counterpoint. At the same time, enhanced access, wayfinding, and signage both to and within the Corridor will increase the visibility of heritage resources and build an identifiable image for use in marketing the Corridor, thereby increasing visitation and stimulating local and regional economic development.

GOALS

The interpretation and orientation goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that *current and future generations of residents and visitors will appreciate and support the preservation of the Corridor's heritage*. Five objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:

Develop a Corridor-wide interpretive framework that is broadly applicable and addresses not only the system's rich past but its present and future as well

Corridor interpretation and education should seek to communicate with contemporary audiences in ways which highlight the relevance of the canal system's history to their lives. Interpretation should not merely inform visitors about events of the past but engage them in active consideration of the legacies of those events and their meaning today. It should factually address the effects of the canals on Native Americans, as well as their continuing contributions to Corridor lifeways.

Historical linkages among Corridor sites and communities will be restored.

Integrate individual communities and heritage sites with each other and into the larger Corridor story

For visitors, one of the most important effects of the creation of the National Heritage Corridor will be a conceptual "reintegration" of the canals and their associated communities to form a clear and comprehensible whole. This will require an effort to provide a consistent and cohesive visitor experience across the entire Corridor, including strategically placed signage that will foster recognition, awareness, pride, and support among both residents and visitors.

Improve the impact and effectiveness of locally and regionally sponsored educational and interpretive programs, facilities and materials, festivals and events across the entire Corridor

Given the wide variety in subject, scope, and quality of ongoing local and regional interpretive and educational efforts within the Corridor, priority will be placed on supporting, improving, and integrating existing interpretive resources across the region, and on identifying and addressing any critical gaps in existing interpretive facilities. For both existing and new facilities, emphasis should be placed on facilitating direct contact with authentic Corridor resources.

Strengthen understanding and appreciation of the Corridor's heritage and importance within and beyond the region's boundary, among residents and visitors alike

New interpretive and educational activities within the Canalway Corridor will highlight the diversity of the region's offerings while introducing clarity and consistency. A range of strategies and methodologies will be employed to help raise the profile of the Corridor not only in upstate New York but in other locations outside of the Corridor that affected, or were affected by, the development and operation of the canal system.

CONTEXT

The Corridor will seek ways to integrate its proposed interpretive and wayfinding frameworks and graphic identity into planned local and regional developments.

Planners developing new interpretive elements for the Corridor will review existing resources and coordinate content and messages between systems.

Far too few people today, even including some who live along or nearby canal routes, are fully aware of the rich and complex history of New York's canals or truly appreciate its impact on their lives. But virtually all Americans know the Erie Canal by name and have at least some awareness of its historic importance. This presents the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with a great opportunity. Where once the canal was an internationally recognized attraction that offered access to popular scenic destinations (the Hudson Valley, Niagara Falls) and great cities (Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo), today it represents the region's pride in its past and its hope for the future. All across upstate New York, citizens have dedicated themselves to preserving and restoring the canals and their legacy, nurturing a kind of canal renaissance that holds out the promise of renewed vitality for the region.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor exists to support and extend this existing momentum and harness this movement's energy to revitalize the region's public image and reinstate the Erie Canal and the New York State Canal System to their rightful place as American icons. As a national initiative, the Corridor is uniquely positioned to reestablish the vital sense of physical and conceptual connectivity that the Erie Canal once provided between the nation's Atlantic Coast and its Midwestern heartland, and among the communities along the canal system's routes. This effort will build upon work completed in several prior planning efforts.

All of the interpretive and wayfinding plans described in this section are generally well-conceived and well-executed, and all offer valuable insights into the range of interpretive possibilities within the Corridor. Because of their geographic or topical focus, these plans do not encompass the breadth of the proposed thematic framework for the National Heritage Corridor (see *Heritage Development Guidelines* section, page 6.17). Together, however, they represent a great deal of research and careful investigation into the Corridor story. Therefore, there is no need to pursue development of additional comprehensive plans. Rather, emphasis should be placed on integrating and rationalizing the contents of existing studies and reports, and highlighting and responding to areas of discontinuity, redundancy, or missing information.

As discussed below, coordination strategies will need to be tailored for each existing plan based on its emphasis and current level of implementation. The goal of this effort is to add a Corridor "overlay" to existing or planned interpretive and wayfinding developments, acknowledging their partnership with and inclusion in the Corridor. The Corridor will also seek ways to integrate its proposed interpretive and wayfinding frameworks and graphic identity into planned local and regional developments.

THE ERIE CANALWAY: A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY OF THE NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM (1998)

This National Park Service report lays the groundwork for the creation of the Corridor and for major portions of this Preservation and Management Plan. It

provides a concise and cogent analysis of the canal system's significance at both a regional and national level, and proposes a set of core interpretive themes that seeks to place the stories of the canals within a broad historical context. The analysis and themes in the special resource study have been updated and expanded in this Plan (see Chapter 2, *National Significance and Historical Context*).

NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN (1995)

Although intended primarily as an analysis of the potential for adaptive reuse of the existing (operating) canal system for recreational purposes, this plan incorporates a comprehensive interpretive framework organized into seven major subjects and applied across 15 "thematic canal regions" (see Appendix 5). The themes identified in the Recreationway Plan – transportation, commerce and industry, the natural environment, cultural heritage, architecture, recreation, and military history – are subsumed within the National Heritage Corridor's proposed interpretive framework (see *Heritage Development Guidelines* section, page 6.17). While the thematic canal regions do not contribute to an understanding of the Corridor as an entity greater than the sum of its parts, the suggested subjects for local interpretive emphasis will be useful to communities seeking to implement the proposed Corridor-wide interpretive framework and should be updated according to the guidelines in this Preservation and Management Plan.

Other than the efforts of the Canal Corporation (see below), minimal implementation of the kind of interpretation proposed in this plan has thus far been undertaken. However, some municipalities and organizations may be proceeding independently with interpretive development based on the plan's thematic distribution. Corridor interpretive and wayfinding planners and designers should coordinate with those cities and villages designated as Recreationway gateways, harbors, and service ports to ensure that interpretive elements developed for those locations incorporate both the local identity and information as well as a Corridor identity and broader, connective Corridor-wide themes.

Emphasis should be placed on integrating and rationalizing the contents of existing studies and reports, and highlighting and responding to areas of discontinuity, redundancy, or missing information.

UNLOCKING THE LEGEND: NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM INTERIM INTERPRETIVE PLAN (2002)

This study, commissioned by the New York State Canal Corporation after consideration of the Recreationway Plan, describes a comprehensive framework of interpretive themes (see Appendix 5) and stories across the canal system and includes some preliminary suggestions for appropriate media and methodologies. Interpretive themes are cross-referenced with actual historic, cultural and natural resources, suggesting a potential thematic distribution of interpretive content along the canal system. While the interpretive themes differ slightly from those outlined in this chapter, there are no fundamental conflicts and many opportunities for collaboration.

To date, implementation of the Canal Corporation's plan has included a number of kiosks at dockside and along the Erie Canalway Trail, as well as low-profile wayside exhibits and wayfinding signage for the trail itself. Additional kiosks are scheduled to be installed at locks and along the trail over the next

few years. Many of these sites will also be prime locations for orientation to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and introduction to Corridor-wide themes. Planners developing new interpretive elements for the Corridor should review these existing resources and coordinate content and messages between the two systems.

UNLOCKING THE LEGEND: NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM SIGNAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES (1999)

Implementation of the Canal Corporation's *Interpretive Plan* (see above) is proceeding based on the design directions in these guidelines, which represent an important effort to establish a clear, cohesive "identity" for signage and interpretive graphics along the canals. The resulting wayfinding elements, combined with the Canal Corporation's signature blue, yellow and red color scheme for lock machinery, railings and vessels, visually tie together many of the historic and recreational resources of the canal system. New interpretive elements for the National Heritage Corridor, including the graphic identity (see *Interpretation Demonstration Projects* section, page 6.39), will be carefully designed to complement the Canal Corporation's guidelines.

NEW YORK STATE COASTAL RESOURCES INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM (NYSCRIP)

This program, developed in 2003 by the Canal Corporation and the New York State Department of State, sets forth themes and design standards for interpretive signage to heighten awareness of the environmental, social, and economic value of New York's coastal and inland waterways resources. Funding to enable communities to implement NYSCRIP is available through the Environmental Protection Fund. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will take an active role in future waterfront interpretive planning by Corridor communities interested in working with NYSCRIP.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY / HUDSON RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Greenway Act of 1991 created two organizations to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving the Hudson River Valley's scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. The Greenway Council, a state agency, works with local and county governments to enhance local land use planning and create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. The Greenway Conservancy, a public benefit corporation, works with local governments, organizations, and individuals to establish a Hudson River Valley Trail system, promote the Hudson River Valley as a single tourism destination area, and assist in the preservation of agriculture, and, with the Council, works with communities to strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Greenway is the management entity of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, created in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the valley for the benefit

of the nation. The Greenway works in partnership with the National Park Service to promote the national heritage area management plan themes of Freedom & Dignity, Nature & Culture, and Corridor of Commerce, and is currently working with the New York State Department of Transportation on new wayfinding signage. The national heritage area overlaps with the Corridor in the Albany region, providing an opportunity for coordinated interpretive and orientation planning.

NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM

The Mohawk Valley and Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridors offer a regional resource with many interpretive materials and sites. In addition, eight Heritage Areas, formerly known as Urban Cultural Parks, interpret themes of regional significance within the Corridor. All incorporate state-funded, locally operated visitor centers. The Albany, Buffalo Theatre District, Hudson-Mohawk (RiverSpark), Rochester High Falls, Schenectady, Seneca Falls, Syracuse, and Whitehall Heritage Areas provide a local focus on topics that generally fit within the proposed interpretive framework for the Corridor, including transportation, defense, business and capital, labor and industry, reform movements, culture, and the natural environment (see Appendix 2 for details).

MOHAWK VALLEY HERITAGE CORRIDOR INTERPRETIVE PLAN (1998)

This plan, developed in conjunction with a management plan, includes proposed interpretive themes for the Mohawk Valley State Heritage Corridor, specific story suggestions, signage and exhibit design directions, and implementation guidelines and recommendations. This study offers a model for other regions within the National Heritage Corridor. The state heritage corridor has begun to deploy “branded” interpretive components, including wayfinding signage, a regional map, and exhibits at visitor centers and other locations. Planners developing new interpretive elements for the Corridor will coordinate content and messages with these existing resources.

WESTERN ERIE CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN (2005)

This document establishes priorities for the state heritage corridor and calls for the development of an interpretive plan to link regional themes to existing and new interpretive facilities, including independently planned visitor centers. The plan acknowledges the National Heritage Corridor as a potential partner in this effort, along with the National Park Service, Canal Corporation, and others. The National Heritage Corridor will take an active role in future partnership opportunities in interpretive planning for the state heritage corridor.

LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic byways – Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revitalization and tourism development. The Byway’s corridor management plan, developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the his-

toric, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected waterway. The *Lakes to Locks Passage Visitor Information and Interpretation Plan* includes an extensive thematic framework (see Appendix 5) that has been used for interpretive media and trip planning aids. Plans are underway for the construction of several visitor centers and interpretive facilities throughout the region. Planners focus on partnering with other initiatives, such as the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, to coordinate content and messages.

NEW YORK STATE SCENIC BYWAYS

Three New York State Scenic Byways already contribute to the wayfinding system within the Corridor.

Scenic byways are roadway corridors designated at either the state or the national level as a means of linking archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities in a linear region. The program is a collaborative effort between communities and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) at the state level, and with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) at the federal level. Scenic byways share many of the goals of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, including preservation and enhancement of resources, public participation, development of tourism, marketing and promotion, and interpretation of resources. The required corridor management plan for a scenic byway addresses issues such as roles and responsibilities, implementation actions, and identification of funding sources.

New York features many scenic byways, several of them directly linked to or relevant to the Corridor (see map on page 6.16, and Appendix 4). Four New York State Scenic Byways already contribute to the wayfinding system within the Corridor: Lakes to Locks Passage, connecting Waterford to Rouses Point at the northern end of Lake Champlain; the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, connecting Waterford to Schenectady; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, encircling Cayuga Lake; and the Revolutionary Trail, connecting Albany to Rome. Lakes to Locks Passage, an All-American Road, and the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, a National Scenic Byway, have also been designated as “America’s Byways” by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Other New York State Scenic Byways provide connections between the Corridor and other significant tourism regions, including the Adirondack Trail, Southern Adirondack Byway, Central Adirondack Trail, Black River Trail, and Scenic Route 90. The Seaway Trail, a 454-mile National and New York State Scenic Byway along the Lake Erie, Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence River waterfronts, parallels much of the Corridor.

NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY

The Thruway Authority manages upstate New York’s primary interstate highway (I-90), which runs within or parallel to the Corridor between Albany and Buffalo. Serving approximately 230 million vehicles traveling more than 8 billion miles each year, the Thruway is the key entry point and circulation route for a majority of Corridor visitors. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has begun to work with the Thruway Authority on developing a Corridor signage program.

The Thruway Authority maintains tourism information centers at several travel plazas and interchanges along the system, some of them staffed year-round or seasonally, where travelers can obtain directional assistance and literature about destinations and attractions in New York. The Canal Society of New York State is sponsoring a project to construct the Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Lock 52 of the Enlarged Erie Canal on the south side of the Thruway, just west of Interchange 40. The Canal Society is coordinating with the Thruway Authority, Federal Highway Administration, State Historic Preservation Office, NYS Department of Transportation, and Cayuga County to develop a rest area that will allow eastbound Thruway motorists to park and learn about the Erie Canal's history and influence on the economic development of New York.

NEW YORK STATE MANUAL OF UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

In New York, signage on all highways open to public travel, regardless of type or the governmental agency having jurisdiction, is governed by 17 NYCRR Chapter V (commonly known as the NYS Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, or MUTCD) of the Department of Transportation's regulations. These regulations vary slightly from the federal MUTCD guidelines. The MUTCD includes provisions for bicycle and snowmobile route markers, historic site markers, and destination markers for standard destinations including various transportation modes/stations, recreation modes/trails, colleges and universities, vineyards, orchards, libraries, lighthouses, fisheries, post offices, and "places where maple products are made." The vineyard destination markers have been used in combination with specially designed logos for four individual "wine trails" in the Finger Lakes region to guide visitors to wineries along state highways.

Existing Thruway informational signage includes the highly recognizable "brown" signs for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and the abandoned Enlarged Erie Canal lock at Port Byron; boundary signs (white on green) for counties and state tourism regions; canal and river crossing signs (white on green) for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal/Seneca River and the Erie Canal/Mohawk River; exit signs (white on green) identifying municipalities, airports, and major attractions such as Women's Rights National Historical Park; and tourism direction signs (white on blue) near exits for food/lodging and gas (including Thruway service areas) as well as attractions, such as ski areas, within a limited radius of exits and meeting minimum visitation standards.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

The challenges to implementation of an effective, integrated interpretive framework across the Corridor reflect the qualities and features that make the region so very attractive as an interpretive destination. The Corridor's complexity promises variety, authenticity, and the potential for unexpected or serendipitous discoveries, but it also has the capacity to confuse visitors. This section considers the Corridor's heterogeneous character in terms of both its challenges and its potential.

The Corridor's complexity promises variety, authenticity, and the potential for unexpected or serendipitous discoveries, but it also has the capacity to confuse visitors.

The Corridor is unusually diverse. It incorporates a wide variety of landscapes: dense urban centers, suburban sprawl, towns and villages, industrial zones, agricultural lands, and undeveloped wild and scenic areas. Economic conditions vary significantly across the Corridor, including pockets of great affluence as well as regions confronting serious economic challenges: unemployment and underemployment, loss of traditional industrial and/or agricultural bases, and overall infrastructure decline. Local heritage resources and the focus of historic interpretation in different Corridor communities and regions address different periods and events from before the arrival of Europeans to the 20th century economic and technological development of New York. Even the waterways themselves change dramatically from canal to canal, and from section to section within individual canals, ranging from robust commercial operations and recreational activities along the fully functioning 20th century Barge Canal to derelict, unwatered portions of the towpath-era canals.

The canals and their influences – past and present, economic, technological, political, social, and cultural – are the single unifying factor which serves to integrate the Corridor’s numerous disparate parts.

Interpretation in the Corridor will always refer back to the canals, and their origins and impacts, to provide a cohesive interpretive fabric.

The canals and their influences – past and present, economic, technological, political, social, and cultural – are the single unifying factor which serves to integrate the Corridor’s numerous disparate parts. It is this simple yet essential idea – the concept of connection – that provides the backbone for interpretation and orientation throughout the Corridor. As the Corridor’s national significance stems directly from its place in history as a route for commerce and ideas, it is only fitting that its future rests on its ability to maximize its role as a cohesive transportation system that effectively articulates connections between transit modes and heritage resources. Interpretation, education, and wayfinding are essential tools for accomplishing this objective.

MULTIFACETED INTERPRETIVE CONTENT

The Corridor’s resources offer access to a remarkable range of interpretive content. Major subjects that are well supported by Corridor resources include engineering and technological invention and innovation; economic and labor history; commerce and industry; pre-canal indigenous cultures; immigration, Euro-American settlement and community development; cultural conflict; disruption and persistence of Native American culture; religious, political, and social reform movements; geography, geology, hydrology, and topography; and cultural history, literature, music, art, and folkways. Within this overall framework, numerous more narrowly defined interpretive directions present themselves. To cite just a few of the most prominent:

- The role of the canals, in each of their successive iterations, as both beneficiaries and drivers of dramatic advances in science and engineering
- The emergence of the United States as a global economic, political, and military power
- The rise of New York City and New York State as regional and national economic powers
- The economic impacts of the canals on adjacent and nearby communities as a force shaping the development of agriculture and industry, commerce and trade
- The striking proliferation of social and religious movements that either formed or matured within the canal system’s sphere of influence, including, among others, women’s rights, abolition, utopianism, and prohibition

- The effect of the canals, both as a source of employment and a transportation corridor, on patterns of settlement, westward migration, and economic growth in New York and the American West
- The canals as a cultural phenomenon, symbols of pride and achievement that attracted worldwide attention and drew visitors to New York, including the practical linkages they provided between established destinations (Hudson River Valley, Niagara Falls, etc.)
- Canal heritage and folkways, especially during the mid- to late-19th century when the system's influence was at its height
- The rise and fall of canals as a fulcrum in the development of commercial transportation systems, from horse and wagon to railroads, trucks and automobiles, and air transport
- Architectural history, as evidenced by a wide array of residential buildings, sacred spaces, and commercial and industrial buildings
- Natural history and environmental biology, related in particular to the rivers, lakes and wetlands associated with the canals
- Human activities in the region before the canal era, including the Iroquois Confederacy and pre-Haudenosaunee settlement, travel, and trade
- The dispossession and continuing role of Native Americans in the region
- European exploration, trade, and settlement of the region
- Military history, especially the Seven Years (French & Indian) War, American Revolution, and War of 1812

Some of these topics can be more effectively interpreted at certain locations within the Corridor than others, based upon the availability of specific tangible or intellectual resources at those sites. Topics relating specifically to pre-canal era events probably should be addressed primarily in the context of their relationship to the canals. There are landmarks of pre-canal occupancies and events throughout the Corridor. The interpretive challenge is to help visitors understand how what happened before the construction of the first canals in the 1790s relates to the central theme of the Corridor: the canal system and its role in shaping America.

In addition, numerous specific sites and stories within the Corridor are directly or at least tangentially related to the canal and are worthy of interpretive attention at the local or regional scale. The interpretive coordination effort that will be undertaken by the Corridor in partnership with local or regional historical societies or commissions on a site-by-site or region-by-region basis will seek to document and organize all of these stories as they relate to the canals. Interpretation in the Corridor will always refer back to the canals, and their origins and impacts, to provide a cohesive interpretive fabric.

DIVERSITY OF INTERPRETIVE ASSETS

The Corridor contains a striking array of existing interpretive assets devoted to presenting a variety of ideas and information – much but not all of it canal-related – to area residents as well as visiting tourists. These vary widely not only in character and style but in their quality and effectiveness. They include signs, interpretive graphics panels, and kiosks of varying vintage and design, sponsored by numerous entities; local and regional visitor centers and tourism facili-

Future interpretive development will be devoted primarily to enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and interconnectedness of existing interpretation and education efforts. The Corridor will seek to identify specific situations in which additional interpretive investment is warranted.

An exclusive focus on centrally located or concentrated facilities will inevitably serve only a small fraction of any target market. A more effective approach for the Corridor would be to focus on connectivity: between modes of travel, between locations, and between stories.

ties; New York State Heritage Area interpretive centers (formerly Urban Cultural Parks); nature centers; historic houses; historic sites; history museums; local historical societies; and even a number of fine arts museums and galleries whose collections and exhibitions directly relate to Corridor themes.

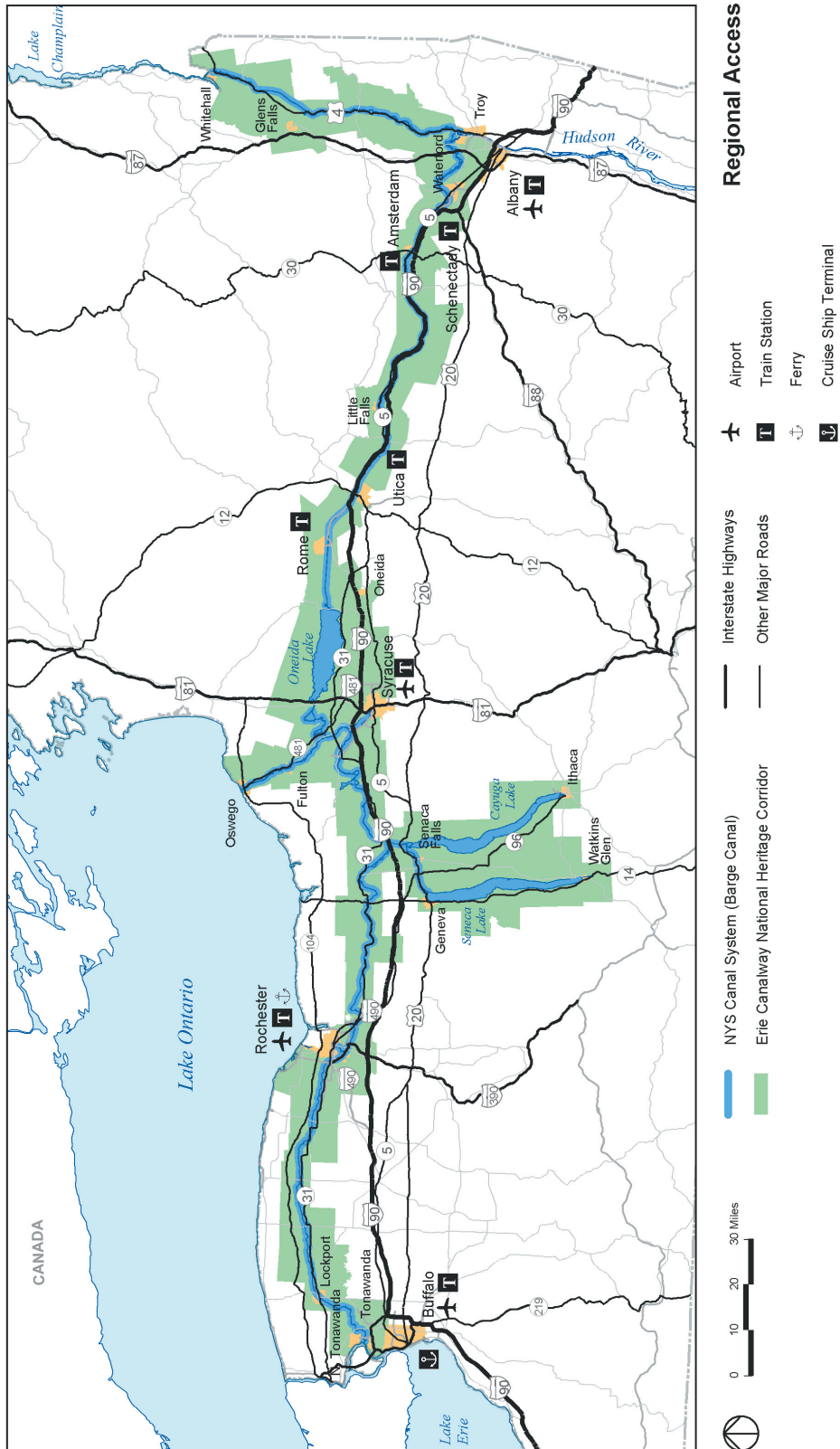
The diversity of interpretive assets can be beneficial, as they should vary to respond to the most effective means of communicating in a given situation. The development of additional interpretive media facilities will need to be relevant to what works best. Visitor centers and centralized interpretive facilities can have a galvanizing effect, especially in areas with a high concentration of historic, cultural, or natural resources and visitor traffic. However, functional interpretive facilities and media already exist within the Corridor and virtually all of these could be substantially improved to better serve visitors. In general, future interpretive development in the Corridor will be devoted primarily to enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and interconnectedness of existing interpretation and education efforts. The Corridor will seek to identify specific situations in which additional interpretive investment is warranted – either through the development of new media or facilities or through the improvement of existing offerings – in order to create a consistent and coherent visitor experience across the entire Corridor. At both existing and new facilities, emphasis will be placed on exposing visitors to the wealth of opportunities throughout the Corridor, and facilitating direct contact with authentic resources.

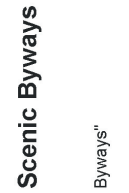
COMPLEXITY OF ACCESS

While the canal systems at one time were the lifeblood of the region, uniting disparate villages, towns, and regions, today the Corridor relies on roadway systems as the primary means of access. Multiple opportunities exist to access the Corridor by roadway, including the New York State Thruway, state routes, and local roads. The entire Corridor is well served by interstate highways, with no point further than 30 miles from a limited access highway and most areas considerably closer.

Roadway networks are more complex than the linear canals, with multiple routes that parallel the canals and many lateral connectors that create a highly permeable region. Roads, trails, and points of arrival via airports, train and bus stations, and ferry terminals require clarity of information and direction. The relationship between these multiple transportation access modes and heritage resources may not be readily apparent to visitors. The key to improving access and orientation in the Corridor will be to capitalize on existing transportation resources, enhance connections between them, and facilitate intermodal transfers, especially between primary (auto, air, train) and recreational (bicycle, boat) modes. For example, allowing bicycles on Amtrak trains would increase visitation to and use of the Canalway Trail by travelers from the Northeast region.

Corridor gateways include airport access via the international and national airports in Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, and Rochester, and regional airports in Ithaca and other smaller cities; passenger rail access to major cities and canal harbors along the Erie and Champlain Canals via Amtrak; limited-stop rail service between New York City and Albany/Rensselaer; inter-city bus service between





major cities provided by Greyhound and Empire Trailways; and commuter bus service for smaller cities. Additionally, a high-speed ferry service between Rochester and Toronto is popular with tourists. Ferry service has also been proposed for Oswego, and Buffalo is planning a cruise ship terminal as part of a major heritage development on the Niagara River.

The multiplicity of opportunities to enter the Corridor and ways to travel through it presents a challenge to planning for interpretation and orientation. A focus on centrally located or concentrated facilities will inevitably serve only a small fraction of any target market. A more effective approach for the Corridor would be to focus on connectivity: between modes of travel, between locations, and between stories.

DIVERSITY OF USERS

Different audiences or user groups within the Corridor have different interpretive and informational interests and needs, but this does not mean that they are mutually exclusive. Local residents who take advantage of the Corridor for purely recreational purposes – jogging, walking, bicycling, boating, fishing, etc. – should be provided with opportunities to learn more about the history or heritage of the region. Indeed, building and sustaining local pride is critical to the Corridor's success. Interpretation and information developed by the Corridor and its partners should serve the destination tourism audience while also reflecting the concerns of local or regional constituencies.

All interpretive facilities in the Corridor should be universally accessible – both physically and programmatically.

Corridor users – whether they are local residents, regional visitors, or destination tourists – employ various transportation modes, traveling by automobile, bus, boat, bicycle, and on foot. Many visitors will combine several modes. Each mode of transportation offers a different perspective, enabling visitors to better experience some aspects of the Corridor but preventing them from experiencing others. Different types of transportation should be served by interpretation and orientation methodologies matched to the specific characteristics of each mode of travel, both in terms of the location and distribution of interpretation and orientation components and of their media and messages.

For example, hikers and bicyclists will tend to travel point-to-point, and interpretation and orientation media at the intersections of logical travel segments – such as the trail markers and kiosks that are currently being implemented along the Canalway Trail – can provide information in discrete blocks, and in a predictable sequence. The same can also be said for boaters. The primary gaps in the wayfinding sequence for trail and canal users are at trailheads and dockages where connections to heritage resources, downtowns, and local services may not be readily apparent. By contrast, travel by personal automobile affords unparalleled flexibility, enabling drivers to pick and choose among multiple possible destinations – and creating a significant demand for comprehensive and reliable travel information and guidance. The primary gaps in the wayfinding sequence for auto travelers are signage elements that would:

- announce the presence of the Corridor from the New York State Thruway and the interstates that run parallel to the canal segments;
- identify key highway exits to reach the Corridor or key destinations; and

- orient visitors on the state arterials that provide lateral access between the highways and specific sites within the Corridor.

Independent and highly mobile visitors to the Corridor must be served by a mix of orientation films or exhibits at wayside visitor centers; conventional technologies such as repeat broadcasting stations; and innovative technologies such as internet broadcasts to wireless personal data assistants and cellphones. At the opposite end of the spectrum, scheduled group tours provide an excellent setting for scripted interpretation programs. Regardless of the audience, all interpretive facilities in the Corridor should be universally accessible – both physically and programmatically – with designs enabling the full participation of persons with disabilities and a full spectrum of media to engage people of all ages and educational levels.

DISCONTINUITY AND LOCAL FOCUS

Although all navigable portions of the 20th century Barge Canal remain intact, remnants of towpath-era canals are scattered piecemeal across the state. A few of these canal fragments are easily recognizable for what they are; most are not. Only a tiny fraction are identified or interpreted, and an even smaller number have water in their channels. In response to this fragmentation, the Corridor's interpretive strategies and methodologies must serve to clearly and consistently identify canal waterways wherever and in whatever form they appear; to distinguish between the different eras of canal construction; and to help visitors locate themselves geographically and temporally within a canal context.

Many resources are identified at the local level but are not identified as part of a larger system of historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources.

Many resources are identified at the local level but are not identified as part of a larger system of historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources. Signage programs carried out by the Canal Corporation, the Mohawk Valley State Heritage Corridor, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the individual National Park Service units help orient and focus visitors, but the multiple identities and overlapping geographies make it difficult to recognize the larger stories that connect them. Some individual municipalities or districts celebrate their connection to the canals through interpretive media, but this practice is inconsistent, and the cumulative impact of the canal system is not evident to the visitor or the resident.

In the eastern portion of the Corridor, scenic byways help orient visitors along the linear travel paths between Albany and Rome and between Albany and Whitehall, although the development and impact of the canal system is only one of many other stories interpreted. Signage conventions have already been established for trailblazing along these routes, which pass through multiple jurisdictions and connect many different heritage resources both physically and conceptually. In the central and western Corridor, with the exception of the Canalway Trail, there are no well-marked wayfinding routes to facilitate the experience of travel along the canals.

Most significantly, public awareness of the canal system as a continuous, connected, unifying entity needs to be enhanced. Civic involvement with the canals and other heritage resources occurs almost exclusively at a local or regional

level, and even recreational use of the waterways tends to be localized. Yet the vital role in linking the Atlantic Coast to the Midwest, and all the communities along the way, is precisely what made the Erie and its lateral canals so important in the first place.

GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

If the canal system's original promoters set themselves the daunting task of convincing their dubious peers and a skeptical public that construction of the new waterway was desirable or even feasible, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor today faces a similar challenge: overcoming some jurisdictional fragmentation, disunity, and inertia to restore the image of the canal system and immediate region as an intact and unified whole. To address this, the National Heritage Corridor will seek to take the lead in encouraging and supporting regional thinking and planning and, whenever possible, regional implementation for interpretation and orientation.

The concept of interconnection that formed the very core of DeWitt Clinton's original vision for the Erie Canal provides a versatile model for developing Corridor-wide interpretation and orientation. Historically, of course, the canal system served as a tangible link between geographically separated places. It connected the communities along its banks, the Atlantic Coast to the Great Lakes and beyond, the American heartland to Europe, etc. The canals served as carriers of information and ideas, both literally, in their practical role as conduits of "data," and more abstractly as a liberalizing influence that may have helped to prepare the ground for the flowering of social movements in the region. And through the simple fact of their continued existence and their on-going transformation from commercial and industrial to primarily recreational waterways, the canals increasingly serve to reconnect modern visitors and residents with their own history and heritage.

This concept – of the canal system as a mechanism for linking the stories and sites within the canal region, and for introducing those stories and sites to the wider world – should be the basis for making decisions about interpretive development in the Corridor. Three components serve as the foundation for implementation of interpretive improvements at the local or regional level: an interpretive framework that represents the Corridor's national significance and its geographic and thematic scope; guidelines for the composition and deployment of various Corridor-wide interpretive media; and parameters for a Corridor-wide graphic identity and wayfinding system.

These guidelines will be further refined and adapted as they are applied "on the ground" in individual communities or regions through cooperation with a variety of partners. This process will include additional measures such as inventories of existing interpretive resources; research on specific underrepresented topics such as the impacts of the canals on Native American life; identification of local audiences, educational opportunities, and planning concerns; public outreach and civic engagement; and ongoing formal consultation with Native American tribes (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*); and coordination with the

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stewards of related heritage resources outside Corridor boundaries, such as the abandoned lateral canals.

GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR-WIDE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The following outline suggests a range of interpretive themes and topics that can be applied and effectively explored at various locations within the Corridor, providing focal points for informing visitors about the canals' significance at a national and even international level. This list is largely based on the outcomes of prior interpretive planning efforts and is meant to be representative rather than exhaustive. Additional interpretive opportunities abound within the Corridor, and while many of these may have more local or regional than national significance, their presence contributes to the interpretive richness that is one of the region's greatest attributes.

Core Theme: American Identity

The overarching interpretive theme of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is the emergence of an American national identity.

The overarching interpretive theme of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is the emergence of an American national identity. Begun at a time when the War of 1812 was still a present memory and the connections of many of the new nation's citizens to their British and European homelands remained strong, the construction of the Erie Canal and its laterals encompassed much of what we now consider to be fundamentally American: charismatic leadership, boldness and risk-taking, territorial expansionism, technological prowess, economic and industrial power, and social interchange. At the same time, the canals brought abuses – the dispossession and forced acculturation of Native Americans, the exploitation of immigrant labor – that Americans have since sought to mend. The Erie Canal served as the loom on which these separate threads were woven into a truly American fabric.

Subtheme: Progress and Power

The New York State Canal System, from its initial conception through its construction and subsequent improvement and reconfiguration, is a profound expression of political will and economic power. As an exercise in state government-sponsored development and an investment in the future, and as an instrument of social change (intended and unintended), the system stands as one of the most significant public works projects in the history of the United States.

- *Topic: Clinton's Ditch* – Personality, political power, and vision
- *Topic: Nation and State* – Jefferson, Madison, Clinton, and the battle to build the Erie Canal
- *Topic: Disruption and Dislocation* – Effects of canal construction and subsequent settlement on Native American societies
- *Topic: Engine of Prosperity* – Economic impacts of canal construction and operation
- *Topic: Model Project* – Other canal initiatives influenced by the Erie's success

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Albany**, where the political fight over the canal was waged; **Rome**, location of the strategic Oneida

Carry, where the first shovelfuls were dug for the Erie Canal and where the first coordinated strike by Revolutionary troops against Native American settlements originated; and **Watkins Glen**, northern terminus of the Chemung Canal, point of departure to canal systems in Pennsylvania, and example of the far-reaching impacts of the Erie Canal.

Subtheme: Connections and Communication

Construction of the Erie Canal created a physical and commercial connection between the U.S. Atlantic coast and the nation's Midwest and West that had impacts far beyond its intended effects. The canal formed the first truly effective means of inland interstate commerce, directly enabling the growth of Midwestern agriculture and the emergence of New York City and New York State as national and international economic powers.

- *Topic: Waves of Grain* – The canals' impact on agricultural development and marketing
- *Topic: Urban Incubator* – Effects of the canals on growth of adjacent cities and towns
- *Topic: Empire State* – Role of the canals in New York State's development as a center of national wealth
- *Topic: World Port* – Role of the canals in New York City's development as the nation's dominant port
- *Topic: New Frontiers* – The canals' impact as a gateway to the Midwest and Great Lakes that helped bind the Union during the Civil War

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Buffalo**, transfer point for west-bound settlers and east-bound harvests; the **Finger Lakes** region, where agricultural landscapes established by the earliest canal trade still dominate; and **Schenectady**, a village transformed into a city by the passage of railroad travelers seeking to avoid the multiple lockages between the Erie Canal and the Hudson River.

Subtheme: Invention and Innovation

The design, engineering, construction and operation of the canals represent an object lesson in the broad impacts of intensive technological development. At the time of its construction, the Erie Canal was longer and more complex than any other in the world. While its design and engineering were based on existing models, the determination to do whatever was necessary to "float over mountains" and link New York City to the Great Lakes demanded both technological and organizational innovations. The effects of this unprecedented concentration of creativity can still be felt today.

- *Topic: American Achievement* – Construction of the canals as a symbol of technological capability
- *Topic: Floating Over Mountains* – Geology, hydrology, and the design and engineering of the canal system's routes, channels, locks, water supply, etc.
- *Topic: Innovation and Adaptation* – Role of the canals as a training and proving ground for America's first generation of engineers; transfer of European canal technology and adaptation to American conditions
- *Topic: Integrated Systems* – Management and operation of canals

- *Topic: Evolution and Adaptation* – Three stages of canal development and continuing “reinvention” of 20th century Barge Canal

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Lockport**, where the contrasting 19th and 20th century solutions to climbing the Niagara Escarpment still stand side by side; **Montezuma**, where changing attitudes about natural heritage led the federal government to rehabilitate and preserve a swamp that had been drained at great cost in conjunction with construction of the Erie Canal; and **Cohoes**, where the long sequence of locks between the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers tested the engineers who established a training program at nearby Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Subtheme: Unity and Diversity

The canal system opened upstate New York and the American Midwest to the Atlantic Coast, and to the world. It carried and connected people and ideas, serving as an agent of social and cultural change that was as vital and influential in its time as the internet is today. Immigrant laborers who came to build and operate the canals introduced an extraordinary expansion of cultural diversity, transforming the character of cities, towns, and countryside along its route. The canals connected hitherto isolated and independent communities and created entirely new ones, forging a common context and a sense of shared identity. They served as both portal and destination for international visitors, whose passage through and perceptions of the canal system informed and influenced the culture of the region, and ultimately, of the nation as a whole.

- *Topic: Indigenous Presence* – Continuing roles of Native Americans in development of the region
- *Topic: Braided Streams* – Immigration, social and cultural interaction, ethnic diversity
- *Topic: Fertile Ground* – Role of canals in creating a hospitable context for social reform and religious movements
- *Topic: Popular Culture* – Image of canals as expressed in literature, music, art, theater
- *Topic: Folkways and Folklore* – The living heritage of the canals
- *Topic: New World Wonder* – Canals as national and international tourist attraction/destination

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Volney**, where the integrated Bristol Hill Church served as a key gathering place for the abolitionist movement; **Schuylerville**, where the centrality of water to day-to-day life has been evident from the time of the Mohawk to the colonial era to the modern day; and **Seneca Falls**, home of the women’s rights movement.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETIVE PRODUCTS AND PLANNING

A determined visitor who seeks out existing interpretive offerings within the Corridor today can actually learn a great deal about the region’s history, but there is a tremendous amount of redundancy and no guarantee that the whole Corridor story will be presented – even in the simplest summary form – at any individual destination. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and its

partners can help to correct this condition by developing and disseminating a visually and thematically consistent system of high-quality interpretive components, from websites and publications to signs and exhibits: a “kit of parts” with a Corridor-wide perspective, featuring the Corridor’s interpretive identity, that can be deployed in various ways across the entire region.

From preliminary pre-visit planning materials to roadside signage and site interpretation, a consistent message consistently presented will dramatically improve the quality of the visitor experience. In all locations, the Corridor will seek to work closely with the owners and managers of existing heritage resources, as well as local and regional institutions, agencies, and civic organizations already working to improve the quality of interpretation and wayfinding. In many situations, the Corridor will seek to provide technical assistance – guidance on interpretive content, advice on program, exhibition, or signage planning and design, consultation on grant-writing and other fundraising strategies – in conjunction with elements from the “kit of parts.”

These interpretive media components will be planned and designed to complement existing materials, but not, for the most part, to replace them. Thus, an additional Corridor presence at a facility will serve to ensure that the total story of the canals is fully and accurately told, but not at the expense of a distinctive local or regional focus and flavor to the existing media. From the visitor’s perspective, a visible Corridor presence will help to weave potentially disparate individual locations into a recognizable overall pattern, and also offer reassurance that the information they’re getting is accurate and complete. To that end, the Corridor’s provision of technical assistance and support for interpretive media components may prioritize heritage resources or communities that agree to uphold certain standards of access and quality through a voluntary certification program or Canalway Community Partner program (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*).

Some components of the “kit of parts” are foundation-level products – items with a basic orientation function and broad scope that probably cannot be fully addressed by any of the Corridor’s partners and will be implemented by the Corridor. Foundation-level products include a documentary, an orientation film, a comprehensive and regularly updated web-based and/or printed guide to the Corridor, and an introductory fold-out brochure and map. The Corridor will also seek to take the lead in developing new interpretive technologies. Products that will be produced in partnership with other interpretive entities in the Corridor include multimedia programs; site-specific publications, wayside exhibits and kiosks; curriculum materials; and appropriate exhibits and interpretive centers. Many of these products should also have internet components, accessible from a single “gateway” site for visitors – an online Corridor-wide library of interpretive materials and information.

By creating some of the components in this “kit of parts” all at once and in relatively large volumes, the Corridor and its partners can gain significant cost efficiencies which will help to make the individual elements more affordable for constituent communities or institutions. Implementing the system in a consistent way across the Corridor will establish a sense of continuity and presence

A consistent message consistently presented will dramatically improve the quality of the visitor experience.

An additional Corridor presence at a facility will serve to ensure that the total story of the canals is fully and accurately told, but not at the expense of a distinctive local or regional focus and flavor.

that will enhance the interpretive effectiveness of local efforts. The following guidelines for the composition and deployment of Corridor interpretive media are suggested to achieve this goal:

Travel and Orientation Materials

Conventional wisdom suggests that informational components provide practical visit planning support for visitors, while interpretation seeks to engage the visitor in a deeper exploration of relevant questions, topics or themes. However, the line between these two categories is difficult to draw with any real precision, and visitors seldom make any such distinction. For this reason, it is critical that some level of interpretation be incorporated into travel and orientation products. Products such as the magazine *Mohawk Valley Heritage* and the *I Love NY Visitors Guide to Seneca County* are excellent examples of this strategy. To the degree that the Corridor's identity comes to be associated with accuracy, reliability, and consistency of interpretation, this will only serve to enhance its effectiveness for marketing, public information, and other related purposes. More information on ways to insert the Corridor presence and message into promotional materials and wayfinding signage can be found in Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*, and below under *Guidelines for a Corridor Graphic Identity* (see page 6.28) and *Guidelines for a Wayfinding Framework* (see page 6.33).

National Heritage Corridor Brief

The National Heritage Corridor would benefit from a basic explanatory text including the Corridor graphic identity; two or three paragraphs explaining the National Heritage Corridor concept and approach; a website reference; and a thumbnail map of the Corridor, New York, adjacent states, and Canada, with major cities indicated. This "boilerplate" material would be inserted into partners' new interpretive products as a highlighted box that would be supplemented by more detailed content where space allows. Appearing in a corner of new interpretive products and informational media throughout the Corridor, this "Corridor brief" would be a minimal way to increase understanding and appreciation of the Corridor in outlets where more extensive interpretive partnerships are not feasible.

Informational Media

Brochures, maps, guidebooks, site bulletins, and seasonal magazines or newspapers – and their online counterparts – should introduce core interpretive ideas while also providing practical trip planning, orientation, and navigation information, and extending the Corridor "brand" (see Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*). The National Heritage Corridor should seek a presence, ranging from the abovementioned Corridor brief to feature articles, in all publications that provide reliable information. The Corridor should have its own foundation-level publication, an introductory fold-out brochure and map in the "Unigrid" style of the National Park Service, as well as a brief Corridor history guide including an overview of the three primary phases of canal development. A comprehensive guide to the Corridor, updated annually, would best

be produced by a private or nonprofit partner dedicated to tourism promotion. Informational media should be distributed through partner organizations, and possibly also through retail tourism outlets in the region and beyond.

The comprehensive guide would be a complex and expensive undertaking, requiring extensive research and coordination with local and regional guides throughout the Corridor. A printed guide would be most helpful to automobile travelers and residents or business travelers making unplanned excursions. A web-based guide would have greater reach – especially to international travelers – and be much easier to update and use, with interactive maps and bulletins on changing information such as canal system openings and closings. Whether printed or web-based, the guide should relate heritage resources and, especially, cities and villages to the larger story of the canal system, with reference to the themes in the proposed Corridor-wide interpretive framework (page 6.18).

Interpretive Panels and Graphics

Simple small-scale graphic panels, installed in local museums, historic sites, and historical societies, would present a “total Corridor” message to complement locally developed interpretation at each site. A diverse typology of panel designs should be developed to reflect and coordinate with the range of possible installation venues throughout the Corridor. At a minimum, content on these panels should include the abovementioned Corridor brief, locate the site within the National Heritage Corridor, and specifically link the stories of that site with broader Corridor themes as outlined earlier in the proposed interpretive framework.

Interpretive Waysides or Kiosks

These freestanding “interpretive hubs” provide more in-depth interpretation of a significant historical site, landmark, or vista. They are most useful alongside resources in isolated locations, such as alongside roadways or at sites or scenic viewsheds in non-settled areas, and in exposed or high-traffic locations, such as rest stops, parks, visitor centers, and malls, where a supply of brochures or other hand-outs would not meet demand or capture the interest of passersby. Generally, horizontal or “cantilever” wayside panels are more appropriate in isolated or exposed areas where the resource at hand can be viewed over or beyond the panel. Vertical or “poster” wayside panels are more appropriate in high-traffic locations where the sign itself may need to be the main focus of attention.

Waysides are most effective where they interpret a physical resource located within view or nearby; brochures and other media are generally more appropriate for interpreting physical resources not at hand, or historical figures and events. Waysides should incorporate primary source material such as historic documents, photos, or artwork, especially where this can illustrate the contrast between historic and modern conditions at a particular location. Deployment of new interpretive kiosks (multi-paneled shelters) should focus on locations not currently served by any existing interpretation. Where interpretation already exists, the Corridor’s presence should be complementary, supporting and extending the messages already being provided.

The Corridor should have its own foundation-level publication, an introductory fold-out brochure and map in the “Unigrid” style of the National Park Service.

Freestanding Interactive Multimedia Stations

“Plug-and-play” web- or computer-based kiosks – such as the U.S. Geological Survey/National Geographic personalized map machines now found in some National Parks and retail stores – should add significant interpretive depth to existing installations and also provide a potential source of revenue. Appropriate installation locations for these units include existing museums and visitor centers, highway travel plazas, airports or ferry/cruise ship terminals, public libraries, and shopping malls within the Corridor, as well as similar venues in selected locations beyond the Corridor (such as New York City) which have particular relevance to the story of the canal system.

Audiovisual and Multimedia Programs

Potential audiences for audio programs (such as radio documentaries), video programs (educational or broadcast), and interactive media include schools and libraries, museums and visitor centers, broadcast media, and community groups. For example, a Corridor-sponsored series of very brief (two minutes) audio documentary programs should be produced and distributed free of charge to local radio stations. The theme of these daily or weekly pieces could be “this day/week in the history of the canals,” with each segment describing a person or event that brings to life some aspect of Corridor heritage. Similarly, CD audio tours focusing on specific sections of the canal system, and describing how the region has changed, could be distributed through educational, interpretive, and tourism outlets. These programs should also be available through a central Corridor interpretive and informational website (see *Informational Media*, page 6.22).

Documentary and Orientation Films

Given its national significance, scenic beauty, and the integrity of resources ranging from towpath-era canal remnants to folksongs and crafts, the Corridor is overdue for a feature or miniseries-length documentary suitable for public television broadcast and available in multiple languages. In addition, a brief orientation film, introducing viewers to the region, its history and its modern-day attractions, might be a valuable component at a number of venues including visitor centers, New York State Heritage Area centers, museums, libraries, and hotels that supplement their in-room television programming with a local tourism promotion channel. The film could include a short piece on the National Heritage Corridor concept and approach, with the full orientation to be shown at the beginning of public meetings, tourism conventions, and other venues to “prime” the audience for a presentation on or discussion of the Corridor. It is important to note, however, that while the development of long-format audiovisual programs is a worthy goal, it should only be undertaken if a specific demand for such products is identified.

The Corridor is overdue for a feature or miniseries-length documentary suitable for public television broadcast and available in multiple languages.

Special Events and Cultural Programming

Cultural programming – performing arts, readings, educational activities, re-enactments, guided tours, festivals, and special events – does more than pre-

serve historic resources; it helps bring historic resources to life. Special events can contribute simultaneously to community identity-building, interpretation of historic resources, and repeat visitation by heritage tourists and others. Cultural programming of particular relevance to celebrating and interpreting the Corridor's heritage resources include boating events, which bring people to the waterfront, encourage recreational boating, and create public exposure for historic vessels; folk arts and crafts festivals, which help communities understand their past and generate support for preservation of cultural traditions; and sporting events, which take advantage of the Corridor's wide variety of recreational settings. An annual signature event, such as a long-distance relay, celebrating human athleticism, drawing spectators to the canals, and raising public awareness of the canal system's historic and modern utility, would be a valuable addition to the Corridor's existing calendar of events (see Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*). Coordination with the Canal Corporation and other organizations could allow for interpretive programming to accompany the lock-throughs of significant commercial cargoes, historic canal boats, and tall ships.

Curriculum Materials

Activities based on the canals' historic and natural resources and study plans developed by the National Heritage Corridor or its partners should support New York State curriculum guidelines for 4th, 7th, and 8th grade social studies; 9th grade earth science; 11th grade biology; and 12th grade physics. In addition to serving pedagogical goals, these materials should be designed to increase awareness of the Corridor and appreciation of its resources among this significant audience group. Field trips to the canals should be encouraged, and changes to the canal system over time – including the ongoing effort to balance preservation and new growth – should be incorporated into higher-level curricula. The National Heritage Corridor, its partners, and the New York State Department of Education should identify historical or natural resources in the Corridor with strong interpretive programming and educational value – including documents, records, and artistic expressions as well as physical resources such as architectural sites, canal engineering, and natural and geological phenomena.

New Technologies

Stewards and interpreters of historical resources have traditionally been slow to recognize the cost savings, and the expanded ability to reach larger audiences, associated with new technologies. The National Heritage Corridor Commission should be an “early adopter” of proven methods to expand audiences and sustain their interest. Investments should be made with an eye toward the future. Ten years before this Preservation and Management Plan was prepared, the internet would not have been seen as the indispensable research and promotional tool it is today. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, significant in part because it was a center of rapid change and technological growth nearly two centuries ago, should be a showcase for new methods of producing, transmitting, and displaying interpretive information. By extending the breadth and depth of its existing internet presence, the Corridor can simultaneously provide enhanced trip planning resources for potential visitors; expand the potential audience for Corridor destinations; and offer a “virtual visit” experience.

The National Heritage Corridor, its partners, and the New York State Department of Education should identify historical or natural resources in the Corridor with strong interpretive programming and educational value.

Cellphones, personal data assistants, and automobile-installed orientation and entertainment systems are increasingly able to receive locally broadcast content, which might be especially helpful in addressing the scale and diversity of the Corridor.

Traveling Exhibits and Interpretive Programming

A traveling exhibition program, offering exhibits at several different scales on a variety of canal-related topics, would offer quality interpretation at an affordable cost to smaller localities without the wherewithal to create their own exhibits. Traveling exhibits should be developed in a variety of scales and formats suited to a range of venues. A small-scale traveling exhibit, with display panels designed for easy packing, transporting, and installment, would be a great educational asset for schools, museums, conferences, and events such as canalfests, fairs, and boat shows, accompanied by talks, demonstrations, and question-and-answer sessions by roving interpretive guides employed by the National Heritage Corridor. A larger and more complex exhibition, featuring authentic artifacts, documents, models, and reproductions, to be displayed and transported in specially designed exhibit trailers to venues throughout New York, will also be undertaken by the Corridor Commission and its partners. The National Heritage Corridor will also contribute to the interpretive and educational programming planned for the *Day Peckinpaugh*, a Barge Canal motorship that has been acquired by the New York State Museum, with assistance from the New York State Canal Corporation and Canal Society of New York State, for preservation and adaptive reuse as a floating museum and classroom (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage).

A traveling exhibition program, would offer quality interpretation at an affordable cost to smaller localities without the wherewithal to create their own exhibits.

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the largest annual cultural event in the U.S. capital, is a potential venue for enhanced interpretive programming outside the Corridor. Research-based presentations of contemporary living cultural traditions would broaden the Corridor's national and international exposure and energize regional tradition bearers and their communities. The National Heritage Corridor will also seek to collaborate with the Smithsonian Institution on other interpretive projects and programs.

Interpretive Centers

Visitor centers or interpretive centers can enhance the quality of visitors' experience of a city or region, providing more intensive exposure to a wider range of resources and themes than many isolated sites. Located where there are higher concentrations of heritage tourists and other target audiences, and integrated into a broader system of "gateways" to the Corridor experience, interpretive centers can help guide a broader audience to stories and sites of particular interest, stimulating deeper understanding and interest in side trips or return visits.

The Corridor is highly porous, with local, regional, and out-of-state visitors approaching diverse sites from multiple directions and points of view. Some may bypass visitor centers by accident, others by choice. History buffs, local residents, and visitors traveling by boat, bicycle, or foot are likely to focus on historic, cultural, and natural resources where they find them – canalside, trailside,

and on the streets of villages and cities. Thus, the vision for the Corridor calls for every existing interpretive site to become a gateway – an opportunity to bring people into the larger story of the Corridor. This Preservation and Management Plan places a strong emphasis on supporting, improving and integrating existing interpretive facilities, while leaving room for efforts to address critical gaps.

Planning for major visitor or interpretive facilities must not divert precious resources from other worthy community or Corridor initiatives. Any proposal to invest substantial resources in such an enterprise should be predicated on evidence that it will yield appropriate rewards in terms of visitor satisfaction and education, and perhaps more importantly, that it will enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience in the Corridor rather than inappropriately concentrating activity in one community or region.

In particular, the National Heritage Corridor should identify the areas of greatest need – such as the absence of a visible interpretive presence for the Corridor along the New York State Thruway, or the relative dearth of existing interpretive media focusing on individuals and ethnic groups – and then explore the potential for developing a facility as a joint venture with public or private partners. For example, the National Park Service’s recently completed Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center was developed and designed in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota – which itself has a major exhibition on the river – and is located within the lobby of the museum’s new building on the river in St. Paul. The MNRRA Visitor Center is thus able to take advantage of important synergies with the museum in terms of both interpretive programming and audience development.

Examples of such opportunities in the Corridor include the Buffalo Inner Harbor Project, where new interpretive centers and extensive historic preservation activities factor significantly in the plans for major new mixed-use waterfront development; and the Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park, where an interpretive center and restored canal structures will be accessible to travelers on the New York State Thruway. These projects offer the potential to bring the Corridor experience to life for a large number of residents and visitors by interpreting key historic resources onsite: remnants of the Commercial Slip in Buffalo, which connected the towpath-era Erie Canal to the Niagara River; and Lock 52 of the Enlarged Erie in Port Byron, alongside a cluster of canal-related structures.

At present there is minimal interpretation in the Corridor of the role and influence of the individuals who envisioned the potential of the canals and had the political, technical, and organizational abilities to see them through to completion. For the most part, existing interpretation similarly overlooks the many immigrant groups whose members provided the labor to build and develop the canals, settled the region’s frontier cities, and created a mix of cultural influences and lifeways that have lasted to the present day. To highlight these special contributions, the Corridor will help to develop an Erie Canalway Hall of Fame. This may be a new facility or an addition to or modification of an existing facility. A site will be selected by the National Heritage Corridor Commission after evaluating proposals from entities willing to operate and maintain the Hall of Fame.

The vision for the Corridor calls for every existing interpretive site to become a gateway – an opportunity to bring people into the larger story of the Corridor.

Permanent Exhibits Outside the Corridor

An important objective for the Corridor is to extend awareness and appreciation of its heritage beyond the boundaries of the region. While the traveling exhibit (see page 6.26) and marketing (see Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*) will work toward the fulfillment of this objective, a physical presence such as a permanent exhibit can do more to raise the Corridor's profile in locations outside upstate New York that were directly affected by the development and operation of the canal system. In addition to addressing the national significance of the canals' effects, interpretive facilities outside the Corridor can also encourage new audiences to experience the canals in person.

One location stands out for its direct relationship to the significance of the canals and their potential to drive new visitation. New York City represents a singular opportunity to re-establish the historical relationship between the Erie Canal and the city it transformed into the nation's gateway to the world. Lower Manhattan, home to a great concentration of national commemorative sites and the point of embarkation for many of the immigrants who made their way west via the Erie Canal, is a natural site for an Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor interpretive exhibit. Millions of New York City area residents and visitors would not only benefit from an understanding of the canal system's role in building the city and the Empire State; they would also learn about the Corridor's modern-day charms, helping to stimulate among a vast and diverse audience a strong interest in directly experiencing the region's heritage and recreational opportunities by visiting upstate.

Lower Manhattan represents a singular opportunity to re-establish the historical relationship between the Erie Canal and the city it transformed into the nation's gateway to the world.

GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR GRAPHIC IDENTITY

A critical challenge facing the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is how to overlay a consistent, cohesive visual identity across the diverse range of resources, destinations, and materials that already exist. The lack of an easily recognizable and consistent Corridor-wide identity is a disincentive to visitation, especially to the kinds of impromptu detours or side trips that tend to extend the stay of visitors. A critical task for the Corridor is to develop a graphic identity for interpretation and orientation throughout the region – a welcoming and recognizable visual clue that signifies both the encompassing presence of the National Heritage Corridor and a reliable standard of quality and national significance – and to sensitively integrate this new identity across the range of sites and destinations that already exist along the canals.

This “overlay” needs to introduce new clarity and consistency of message for visitors and residents, without overwhelming or eroding the distinctive character of the Corridor's existing offerings. The goal is not to make the Corridor experience uniform; to the contrary, it is important to emphasize the diversity of the Corridor's offerings while introducing new clarity and consistency of message for visitors, and providing a cohesive character. Individual communities and sites naturally tend to focus on their particular resources. In order to achieve the greatest impact, the Corridor's graphic identity must:

- act as an “umbrella” encompassing the region's multifaceted interpretive fabric and visual identities;

- broadcast to residents and visitors the presence of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as a cohesive entity; and
- highlight the participation of the National Park Service and acknowledge the significance of the National Heritage Corridor designation.

The Corridor graphic identity should connote accuracy and reliability in the minds of visitors, spurring confidence that they can expect a high-quality experience. Thus, in addition to serving as the characteristic design element of Corridor informational, wayfinding, and interpretive components, the graphic identity should also be the primary element of a certification system which would allow the Commission to recognize those preservation and interpretation efforts that meet certain standards of quality, content, and compatibility with the Corridor's thematic framework and guidelines for interpretive development. Only those initiatives that meet these standards should be promoted and permitted to use the Corridor identity as "certified" Corridor sites or educational programs. As such, the graphic identity would act as a kind of National Heritage Corridor Commission "seal of approval" (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*).

Design Parameters

A crowded and confusing field of competing logos and symbols, many sharing overlapping graphics, are currently used in a wide variety of interpretive signs, marketing brochures, and other materials by owners, managers, and promoters of the Corridor's heritage resources and attractions. A study of these marks strongly suggests that the addition of yet another stamp or logo, especially one based on a familiar symbol such as waves or a canalboat, would not advance the Corridor's unifying mission. The graphic identity must symbolize the Corridor's historical and contemporary aspects, while precluding confusion with existing visual identities in the region.

The National Park Service arrowhead is seen by many Corridor residents and stakeholders of its heritage resources as an important mark of credibility and familiarity that should be incorporated into the Corridor's public image and graphic identity. The NPS "Unigrid" system is also seen as a highly recognizable and flexible feature that establishes consistency and authority when the characteristic "black band" is placed across the top of a variety of NPS signage and materials. Together, the arrowhead and the black band would lend considerable weight to the Corridor's graphic identity.

The name "Erie Canal" is universally recognized, unlike the terms Clinton's Ditch, Old Erie Canal, Enlarged Canal, Barge Canal, or New York State Canal System. Similarly, residents use local appellations such as the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals and the Mohawk River. While these terms are part of the historic story of the Corridor, and are necessary to identify individual elements of the canals, the variety of terms is confusing. A single unifying name is necessary to orient residents toward a Corridor-wide vision, and to provide casual or prospective visitors with a clear understanding of what they can expect to see. The historically and geographically specific terms are better explained after the visitor arrives.

A critical task for the Corridor is to develop a graphic identity for interpretation and orientation throughout the region – a welcoming and recognizable visual clue that signifies both the encompassing presence of the National Heritage Corridor and a reliable standard of quality and national significance – and to sensitively integrate this new identity across the range of sites and destinations that already exist.

Because it contains the words “Erie Canal,” the term “Erie Canalway” can be used to capture both the historical and contemporary associations that give the Corridor its unique quality. The word “way” also contains numerous connotations that are applicable to the Corridor: a path or a link, as in the Thruway, a byway or a trailway; a direction, as in the way West; a means of entry or discovery, as in a gateway; a style or manner of life, as in folkways. A typographic image or wordmark using color, style, formation, and juxtaposition can be used to give meaning and impact to the letterforms of the words “Erie Canalway,” thus establishing the central visual motif of the graphic identity.

The addition of other shapes or forms to the words “Erie Canalway” tends to render them less legible and diminish their importance. The use of landscape or nature images, which is common to other state and National Heritage Areas, would be limited to one or two images and therefore fail to reflect the Canalway Corridor’s tremendous diversity of settings. The use of abstract geometric elements such as wavy lines would diminish the boldness and simplicity of the text. Arranging the words in a circle around an object, such as a boat, would be too similar to existing symbols such as the Canal Corporation packet boat logo and would be incompatible with the National Park Service arrowhead.

Graphic Identity Concept

While the illustrative examples provided in this Preservation and Management Plan convey the concept of a proposed Corridor graphic identity and its applications, further work is needed to develop a final graphic standard. The concept that is presented in this Plan consists of three basic elements: a wordmark representing the words “Erie Canalway,” and the NPS arrowhead, on a horizontal black band. This combination of elements is simple, clear, distinct from existing Corridor visual identities, and highly flexible in its form of application. It could be integrated with new and existing directional and interpretive signage, brochures, and other marketing materials without the need to substantially reconfigure them.

The wordmark uses the words “Erie Canalway” with descending baselines for “Erie,” “Canal,” and “way” in order to visually allude to the lock system. The graphic use of strong, inviting letterforms to illustrate the motion of a boat passing through the changing water elevations is intended to be both legible and memorable. The wordmark implies movement and structure without specifying a particular place or activity within the Corridor. A mental pause is created when reading the wordmark, inviting reflection on its significance and connotations. The word “Erie” is highlighted.

The arrowhead resides where it is most effective, isolated from other words or symbols at the rightmost end of the black band. In most applications, a fourth element, the descriptor “National Heritage Corridor,” would be added adjacent to the wordmark. The descriptor can be arranged in a variety of ways alongside the wordmark. Adding an image such as a canalboat to this graphic identity would reduce its clarity and introduce gimmicky or cute qualities not representative of the Corridor concept. When appropriate, the names or logos of



Corridor Graphic Identity Concept (Top)

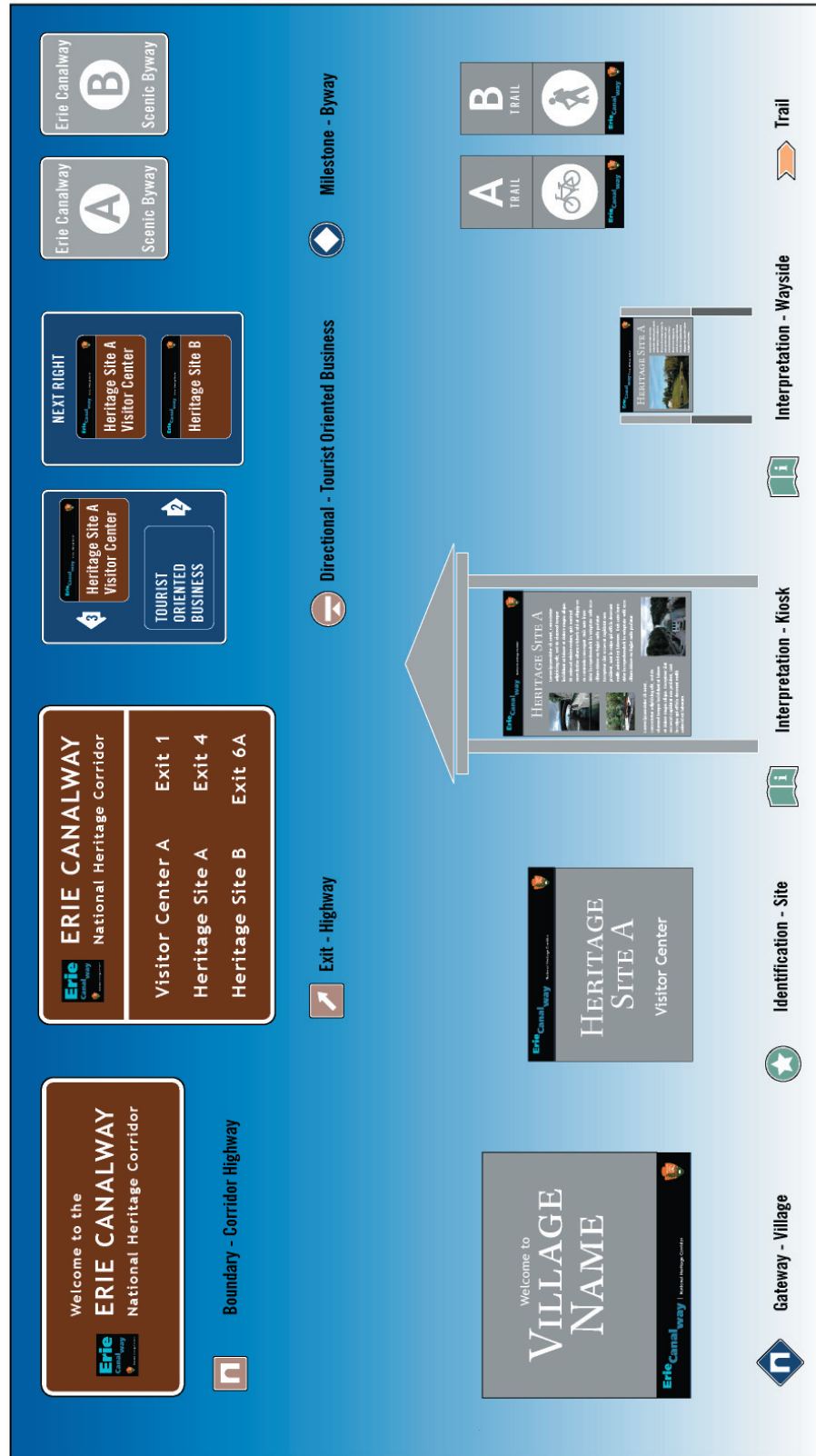
Corridor partners could be added beneath the graphic identity, right-justified below the arrowhead.

Application

Flexibility in overall size and the length of the black band make the graphic identity concept applicable to multiple situations. The strong banner quality allows it to literally sit above, or across the top, of signage and other symbols used by partner organizations, fulfilling the “umbrella” requirement. However, different applications may require different configurations. A basic “family” of shapes for the Corridor’s graphic identity includes the standard banner, a compressed banner for use where visibility from a distance is a requirement, and a square format that could be used as a logo where appropriate.

For some applications, further modifications would be necessary to address issues of context and scale and the requirements of the New York State Department of Transportation. Basic usage standards are provided in Chapter 9, *Implementation*, and will have to be elaborated. The Canal Corporation’s March 1999 publication “Unlocking the Legend: New York State Canal System Signage Design Guidelines” represents the scope of work necessary to guide implementation of an effective graphic identity system.

Actual implementation of the graphic identity system would occur in phases and through cooperation with partners throughout the Corridor. The highest priority should be the gaps in the proposed wayfinding system. Over time the signage system and the Corridor graphic identity will be incorporated into new heritage facilities or facility improvements, and eventually into the replacement and updating of existing signs.



Erie Canalway
National Heritage Corridor
 Identity and Information Hierarchy

GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR-WIDE WAYFINDING FRAMEWORK

Although there are many successful wayfinding and signage programs in the region (see *Resource Analysis* section, page 6.9), a consistent and unified wayfinding identity for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is lacking. Key gaps in information and directional signage exist in the sequence of traveling from the region's gateways and highways to its local heritage resources, particularly waterfronts and downtown areas in smaller communities. A Corridor-wide wayfinding framework is proposed to allow visitors to the region to clearly identify the Corridor as a place and to find key destinations within the Corridor. The wayfinding system will orient people using varying modes of transportation, including trains, boats, automobiles, and bicycles, as they move from gateway locations or regional highways to arterial and local roadways, districts, parking areas, and foot and bicycle trails.

An overall concern for any wayfinding system is to provide enough information to orient and direct the visitor without contributing to visual clutter in the landscape, taking into consideration points of arrival, key destinations, and desired paths of travel. In order to maximize the effectiveness of wayfinding, a system of signs must establish a recognizable identity with consistent design elements such as colors, typeface, and logos. The signage systems must also anticipate the sequence of arrival from transit hubs and interstate highway systems, to state and local roads, to town and village centers, to parking locations, to pedestrian level environments. At each point along this sequence, the level of information on signs must vary to address the audience and the mode of travel.

The proposed wayfinding framework for the Corridor is intended to establish a visually consistent and recognizable signage system that can work in many different situations and respond to the regulatory requirements of the New York State Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The following categories of signage provide the necessary hierarchy of information for the traveler:

1. Corridor Boundary
2. Tourist Direction
3. Scenic Byway
4. City/Town/Village Gateway
5. District Identity
6. Site Identification
7. Interpretive
8. Historic Marker
9. Trail Marker

The primary gap in existing wayfinding for the Corridor exists at the highway level, where boundary and tourist direction signs are essential to announce the “umbrella” presence of the Corridor and orient visitors to specific destinations. Major gaps in wayfinding along the length of the Corridor exist along the central and western Erie Canal and along the Oswego Canal, where new scenic byways or their equivalent could orient visitors along continuous state routes.

A Corridor-wide wayfinding framework is proposed to allow visitors to the region to clearly identify the Corridor as a place and to find key destinations within the Corridor.

A diagrammatic illustration shows the Corridor graphic identity concept employed across the top or bottom of most of the signs in the proposed hierarchy. For highway boundary and exit signs, the graphic identity is employed as a logo within the standard sign format; here, the logo conveys a purely visual cue, while additional text is reproduced in a size and format legible to the highway driver. On the directional signs, the graphic identity is similarly incorporated as a visual cue into the logos of heritage sites or tourist oriented businesses. The graphic identity is not incorporated into the scenic byway signs, which utilize a system of logos established by DOT (see page 6.37).

In many cases, localized signage (City/Town/Village Gateways to Trail Markers) already exists; these vary by jurisdiction and by site, with a wide range of styles, typefaces, color, and logos. While this variety emphasizes the uniqueness of these places, an overall Corridor identity needs to be appended in order to orient visitors and convey the rich connections between sites. As new signs are added to the system, strategies will be developed to incorporate the Corridor graphic identity without detracting from the primary message about the municipality, site, or trail. The design, implementation, and maintenance of all signs on public roadways will need to be approved by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) according to the MUTCD guidelines.

Two additional diagrammatic illustrations on pages 6.35-6.36 show how the proposed wayfinding framework might be applied in two general situations: near a municipality, and near a more isolated heritage site. The symbols used in these illustrations are provided as a symbolic key and are not intended to be incorporated into the actual wayfinding signs indicated.

Corridor Boundary

Boundary signs should announce entry into the Corridor at key access points. Boundary signs are crucial for providing a sense of arrival and establishing the Corridor presence and graphic identity for visitors so that they can anticipate additional signage at lower levels in the hierarchy. Since Interstate 87 from Albany to Glen Falls (60 miles) and the Thruway (Interstate 90) from Albany to Buffalo (290 miles) travel within the Corridor for most of their length, only a limited number of boundary signs are necessary.

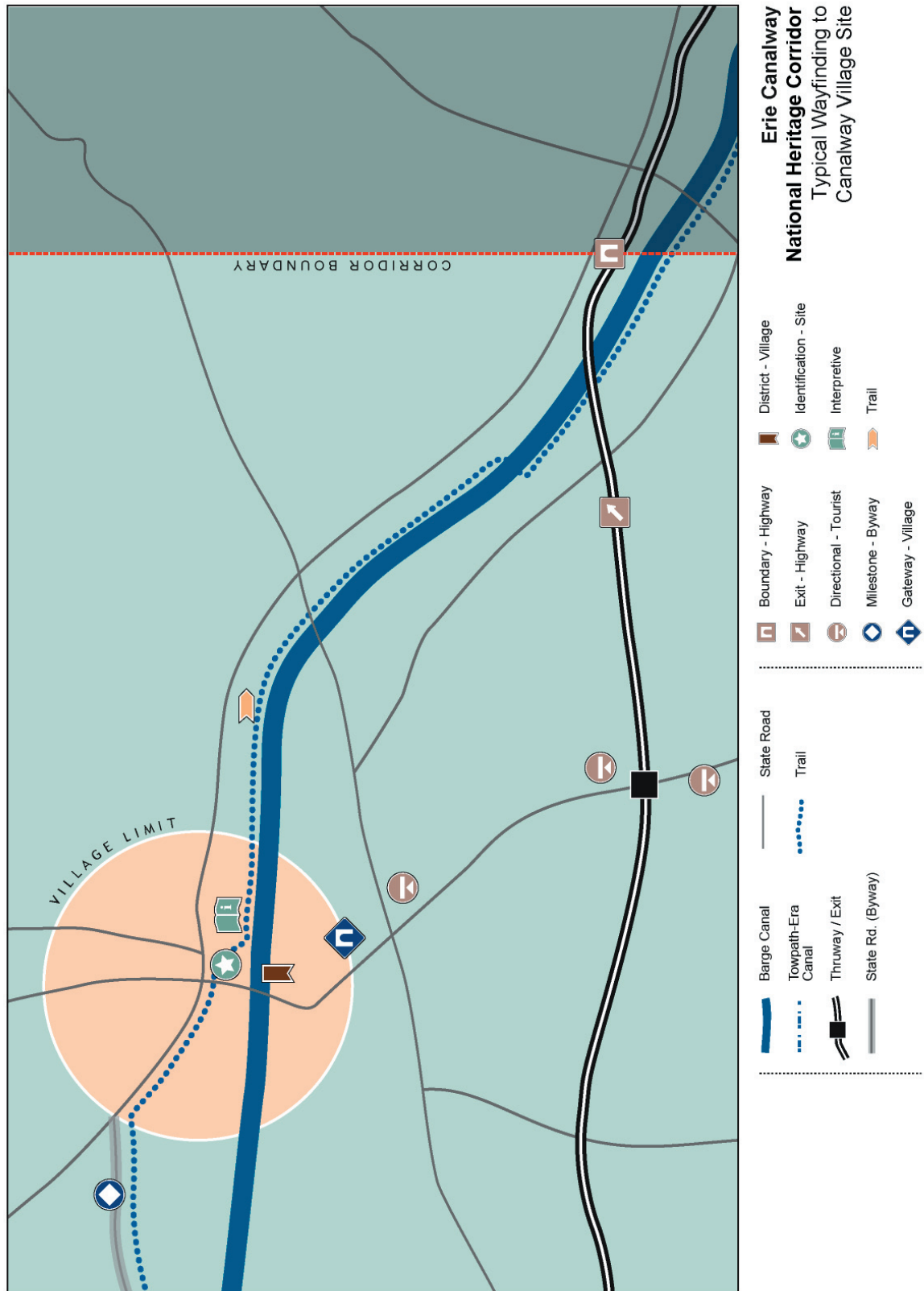
Tourist Direction

Tourist Direction signs indicating the availability of gas, food, lodging, camping, and attractions near upcoming exits are provided on interstate and controlled-access highways. Followup signs with directional arrows are also placed on exit ramps. The Corridor will seek to increase the amount of appropriate attractions signage for historic, cultural, and natural sites and heritage tourism services such as tour boats. Where logos are permitted, the Corridor will seek to incorporate its graphic identity into the logos of attractions on these tourist direction signs according to DOT regulations.



Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
Typical Wayfinding to Canalway Village Site

<p>Barge Canal</p> <p>Towpath-Era Canal</p> <p>Thruway / Exit</p> <p>State Rd. (Byway)</p>	<p>State Road</p> <p>Trail</p>	<p>Boundary - Highway</p> <p>Exit - Highway</p> <p>Directional - Tourist</p> <p>Milestone - Byway</p> <p>Gateway - Village</p>	<p>District - Village</p> <p>Identification - Site</p> <p>Interpretive</p> <p>Trail</p>
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Scenic Byways

The New York State Scenic Byways program complements the Corridor's wayfinding system by helping formalize touring routes along parts of the Corridor. Because scenic byways are established programs, signage conventions have already been established for trailblazing along these routes, which pass through multiple jurisdictions. These physical linkages connect many different heritage resources. The priority for the Corridor is to establish additional routes that complement existing scenic byways. Four New York State Scenic Byways already contribute to the wayfinding system within the Corridor, marked under guidelines established by DOT: Lakes to Locks Passage, connecting Waterford to Rouses Point at the northern end of Lake Champlain; the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, connecting Waterford to Schenectady; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, encircling Cayuga Lake; and the Revolutionary Trail, connecting Albany to Rome.

Distinctive signage can be placed along federal and state designated scenic byways to celebrate the unique character of a route. These signs are placed at major turns and as periodic reinforcements at intervals of five miles along the route. Over time, literature describing these existing routes can be expanded to recognize the Corridor and to incorporate additional interpretive information regarding the larger story of the region.

New scenic byways would facilitate wayfinding along the 19th and 20th century Erie, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. As locally guided programs, new byways could be implemented in coordinated segments highlighting the particular history and character of a region, while tying back to the larger story and identity of the Corridor. The names and distinguishing logos of these individual byways, while conforming to DOT standards, could feature common elements related to the Corridor name and graphic identity. Candidates for new Corridor byways may include:

- State Route 5, which follows the general alignment of the towpath-era canal between Oneida and Camillus and then connects on to Seneca Falls;
- State Route 31, which closely parallels the route of the Erie Canal from Clyde to Lockport, continues on to Niagara Falls in the west, and follows the route of the 20th century Barge Canal from Clyde to Oneida in the east; and
- State Route 48, which parallels the Oswego Canal.

From a visitor's point of view, increased signage and promotion of new and existing byways would be an improvement over the current system of state route numbers. Byways may also follow county and local roads to provide better access to recreational, cultural, scenic, or natural resources.

City / Town / Village Gateway

In order to celebrate their collaboration with the National Heritage Corridor, cities, towns, and villages participating in the Canalway Community Partner Program (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*) may choose to add the Corridor visual identity to existing or new gateway signs. Since the signs are implemented at the local level, they vary by locale, with unique typefaces, colors, and shapes as

New scenic byways would facilitate wayfinding along the 19th and 20th century Erie, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals.

appropriate. Existing signs typically feature the name of the municipality and other pertinent information such as settlement date, logos, or other images. If desired, municipalities could choose to add the Corridor graphic identity as a banner above or below their existing signs using the consistent black band, Corridor name, and NPS arrowhead. The Corridor graphic identity may be applied to municipal boundary signs within highway rights-of-way pursuant to approval by DOT.

District Identity

District identity signs are found in many cities and larger towns to orient visitors to key areas. These signs are unique to the locale and probably do not need to have the Corridor visual identity added to them, although it may be desirable if the district is canal related.

Site Identification

Specific destinations within the Corridor are identified with signs that announce entry and provide the name of the site and other site specific information. Where these signs already exist, such as at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, and Canal Corporation locks and facilities, the Corridor graphic identity could be added as a banner to make the connection between the specific site and the larger Corridor story and identity. Over time, new signs may be developed and could incorporate the Corridor graphic identity and the specific site name.

Interpretive

Interpretive signs orient visitors to specific features at the site and provide information about the history, natural environment, or cultural context. At this point in their journey, visitors are on foot and can absorb more detailed information through narrative text, maps, photos, and diagrams. Similar to site identification signs, the Corridor graphic identity could be added to existing signs and incorporated into the design of new signage together with recognition of other partners. More information on the composition and deployment of interpretive signage is provided under *Interpretive Products and Planning* (page 6.20).

Historic Markers

Historic markers are primarily commemorative, with narrative text in formats that vary by locale and jurisdiction. Due to the style and nature of these existing signs, no identity for the Corridor is necessary.

Trail Markers

The Corridor features a number of bicycle, towpath, and other walking trails (see Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*). Trail markers vary by locale but typically feature a logo and a directional arrow. The recommended strategy for markers not designated as official traffic control devices is to add the Corridor graphic identity to these signs as a banner to reinforce the Corridor identity.

INTERPRETATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Much of the support that will be provided to communities by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners over the coming years will be in the form of technical assistance: workshops, referrals, expert consultation, and other “how-to” help with the preparation of local and regional visions, plans, projects, and applications for grants and other financial assistance (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*). The demonstration projects serve as models for the Commission’s future work among the 234 municipalities along the current and historic alignments of the New York State Canal System.

The interpretation projects are intended to illustrate how the thematic framework described in the Heritage Development Guidelines section of this chapter could be applied, in two locations, to support an engaging, dynamic, and consistent experience of the Corridor’s resources for both residents and visitors, building awareness and understanding of the Corridor’s past, current, and future link to American identity. The Village of Schuylerville/Town of Saratoga and the communities along the Old Erie Canal between Camillus and Rome were selected in order to learn from the valuable resources and important stories they encompass; to address a variety of characteristics and geographic locations; and to acknowledge the high level of commitment and interest shown by the communities’ responses to information surveys distributed by the Commission in 2004.

Each project was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the community identified and contacted key stakeholders, established a meeting location, gathered materials and information on local interpretation conditions and priorities, and selected a particular set of interpretive challenges or theme to be investigated. In the second phase, the community hosted a workshop, facilitated by the consultant team, to discuss challenges and opportunities, identify priorities, partnerships, and potential funding sources, and propose a framework for action. In the third phase, the consultants returned to the community to present their analysis and documentation of the workshop and recommended next steps. That analysis is presented here.

SCHUYLERVILLE/OLD SARATOGA COMMUNITIES

The Schuylerville/Old Saratoga community is located on the Champlain Canal. The region is rural, with minimal interpretive development of canal-related stories, but it features several vital assets, including adjacency to well established tourist destinations in nearby Saratoga Springs; existing name recognition as a Colonial Era and Revolutionary War heritage tourism destination; and exceptional historic canal-related resources. In addition, the community has a demonstrated record of visionary planning activities, cooperative efforts with other regional or statewide organizations, and solid local support for the development of interpretive and heritage tourism opportunities. At issue here is the complexity of interpreting multiple, overlapping stories and histories and incorporating the themes of several overlapping designated historical regions, including Lakes to Locks Passage; the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

dor; the Mohawk Valley (State) Heritage Corridor; and possibly, in the future, the boundary expansion of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

Project Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

(This analysis is the output of the consultant team's observations and experience and not the output of a group of stakeholders' collective thoughts.)

Strengths:

- Authentic interpretive context and resources
- Adjacencies with existing well developed tourism destinations
- Rich mix of interpretive themes and storylines, including both canal and non-canal topics
- Rare co-alignment of waterways: river, 20th century Barge Canal, and towpath-era canal route
- Easy accessibility to and between interpretive sites
- Solid, well organized local support structure

Weaknesses:

- Lack of well developed interpretation or visitor experiences at many destinations
- Absence of gateway orientation and visit planning components
- Low levels of public awareness of canal themes, relative to the region's better established Colonial Era/Revolutionary War identity

Opportunities:

- Develop Old Saratoga region as a cohesive destination
- Leverage proximity of established tourist sites



Towpath-era Champlain Canal, Schuylerville

- Develop individual sites and facilities to provide complete, varied and complementary experiences
- Engage visitors in multi-day, multi-site experiences
- Capitalize on authenticity of historic resources

Threats:

- Most sites and facilities operating without adequate staff or financial resources
- Competition for both resources and visitation from higher profile sites
- Potential for visitor disappointment if quality of experience does not meet expectations
- Organizational complexity complicates communications and inhibits coordinated development

Vision 2017: At the Canal: A Visitor's Narrative

"July 4, 2017 – The 200th anniversary of the start of construction on the Erie Canal marks the first weekend of Canal Month, an increasingly popular annual event along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

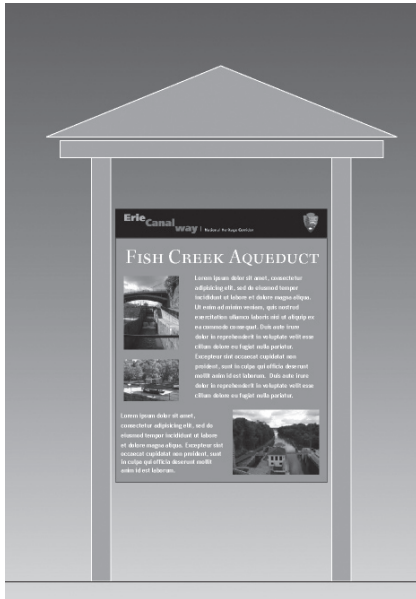
Across the length of the Corridor, from Lake Erie to Lake Champlain, communities large and small and countless institutions and organizations are working together to celebrate the rich history and heritage of the New York State Canal System, and to share canal stories, resources, and experiences with visitors from around the world.

Like many visitors, we take advantage of high quality orientation and visit planning information available over the internet. We learn how past and present are interwoven along modern and historic canal routes, and we discover a destination near the eastern end of the Corridor that seems especially appealing. Schuylerville and Old Saratoga offer just the right mix of activities and sights for our family: Revolutionary War history, intriguing social and cultural history, recreational opportunities, and natural and environmental resources, as well as examples of 19th and 20th century canals.

With a destination in mind, we create our own customized itineraries and interpretive background packages. Historical information about Schuylerville and Old Saratoga, site profiles and hours of operation, and even driving directions are combined in a unified, user-friendly format. An initial package printed out at home is supplemented by more detailed materials accessed through high visibility kiosks at New York State Thruway rest stops and destinations such as the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and the Saratoga Racetrack.

At the Old Saratoga Orientation Center in Schuylerville, we are introduced to the area's many resources and interpretive themes. Working together at the touchable interactive regional model, we set our priorities for the week.

From our base in Schuylerville, we take day trips throughout the area. At each destination we discover something special, but National Heritage Corridor interpretive materials at many sites remind us of how the story of the canal



Mock-up of interpretive signage for Fish Creek near Schuylerville

intersects with local and regional themes. Before we came here we didn't realize how interconnected our experience would be.

Each day as we drive from site to site, we learn more about the remarkable history of our surroundings through lively and informative cellphone based interpretive programs. Beautiful orchards and lush horse farms illustrate the region's agricultural heritage, and diverse historical destinations abound. Plugging the phone into our car's audio system brings us an aural tapestry of historic sounds, recreations and dramatizations, and expert explanations – all keyed to specific points along the way. Consistent and recognizable highway signage helps us find our way from site to site and lets us know when we've arrived.

At Lock 5 on the modern Champlain Canal, we are awed by the passage of commercial and pleasure boat traffic through the working locks. Interpretive exhibits, jointly sponsored by the National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Canal Corporation, describe the history and operations of this remarkable site.

From Lock 5 we walk to a trailhead at the northern end of the towpath trail in Schuyler's Canal Park. The walk takes us just a short distance on the ground, but nearly 200 years back in time. The quiet, shaded towpath trail runs along the bank of the partially excavated and restored Old Champlain Canal, and at every turn a fascinating bit of history is revealed. An interpretive wayside graphic panel along the trail explains how the Barge Canal bypassed the town, undermining the local economy. It also reminds us that this is a National Heritage Corridor site. The mix of nature and history here is truly inspiring, and we return every morning for a constitutional before we begin our day of sightseeing.

On a hillside outside Schuylerville, we pause at an interpretive overlook. From here, the region's braided stories are all on view: the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal; the Wilcox House, an important Underground Railroad site;



Schuyler House, Schuylerville

Fish Creek, a natural area with an early canal connection; and the site where retreating British soldiers set up their artillery during the battle of Saratoga.

At the General Schuyler House in Schuylerville, we enjoy a guided tour of the home that the Revolutionary War hero built after his original mansion had been burned by the British in 1777. We are surprised to discover that this site, too, has important connections to the story of New York's canals. Schuyler himself first proposed building canals during the 18th century, and a half-century later his grandson was instrumental in the construction of the Champlain Canal. Outside the historic house, an Old Saratoga/National Heritage Corridor kiosk provides orientation and interpretive context."

Summary Recommendations

In order to achieve this vision of an enhanced visitor experience, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners will need to collaborate on a sustained program of coordinated improvements. Over the short- to medium-term, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop and disseminate cohesive visit planning materials for the Schuylerville/Old Saratoga region which incorporate the National Heritage Corridor designation and graphic identity.
- Provide professional technical assistance to Schuylerville/Old Saratoga sites and communities to enhance their ability to coordinate their separate offerings, and to improve the overall quality of interpretation throughout the region.
- Develop and install a coordinated system of interpretive signage at Schuylerville/Old Saratoga sites, jointly sponsored by National Heritage Corridor, Old Saratoga on the Hudson, Lakes to Locks Passage, Mohawk Valley (State) Heritage Corridor, and Heritage New York, to encourage cross-visitation.
- Develop a long term strategic interpretive plan for the region, which outlines a framework for development over a 5- to 10-year period, identifying specific goals and objectives, action items, and annual implementation benchmarks.

OLD ERIE COMMUNITIES

The Old Erie communities and destinations included in this demonstration project are located along the route of the towpath-era Erie Canal, extending roughly from Camillus to Rome. These communities – the Town of Camillus, the Village of Canastota, the Village of Chittenango and Town of Sullivan, the Town of DeWitt, the Town of Geddes, the Town of Manlius, and the City of Syracuse – feature a number of established interpretive destinations with canal-related missions or themes. Communities within the region have already initiated a cooperative effort to plan and develop their heritage tourism attractions through the informally organized Partners Along the Canal Towpath (PACT) group. At issue here is the risk of repetition and confusion for visitors when several com-

munities all share a similar story. Although the story of the Old Erie Canal can be interpreted in multiple ways, coordination is needed to ensure a continuous, quality community experience.

Project Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

(This analysis is the output of the consultant team's observations and experience and not the output of a group of stakeholders' collective thoughts.)

Strengths:

- Authentic interpretive context and resources
- Alignment along Old Erie Canal route
- Existing infrastructure of facilities and established destinations
- Easy accessibility to and between sites
- Varied character and interpretive focus of existing sites

Weaknesses:

- Lack of clear linkages or connective experience among sites
- Limited visibility of "canal" features
- Absence of gateway orientation and visit planning components
- Fluctuating quality of interpretive experiences

Opportunities:

- Develop overall region as a cohesive destination
- Develop individual sites and facilities to provide complementary experiences
- Engage visitors in multi-day, multi-site experiences
- Capitalize on authenticity of historic resources



Old Erie Canal in Canastota

Threats:

- Most sites and facilities operating without adequate staff or financial resources
- Competition among sites for resources and visitation
- Potential for visitor disappointment if experience quality does not meet expectations
- Organizational complexity complicates communications and inhibits coordinated development

Vision 2017: At the Canal: A Visitor's Narrative

"July 4, 2017 – The 200th anniversary of the start of construction on the Erie Canal marks the first weekend of Canal Month, an increasingly popular annual event along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Across the length of the Corridor, from Lake Erie to Lake Champlain, communities large and small and countless institutions and organizations are working together to celebrate the rich history and heritage of the New York State Canal System, and to share canal stories, resources, and experiences with visitors from around the world.

Many visitors take advantage of high quality orientation and visit planning information available over the internet. We learn how past and present are interwoven along modern and historic canal routes, and we discover a cluster of communities in the central part of the Corridor that seem an especially appealing destination. The Old Erie region offers a wide variety of activities and sights within easy driving – or even bicycling – distance of one another.



Aqueduct at Old Erie Canal State Historic Park



Sims Store Museum, Camillus

With a destination in mind, we can create our own customized itineraries and interpretive background packages. Historical information about Old Erie communities, location profiles and hours of operation, and driving directions are combined in a unified, user-friendly format. An initial package printed out at home is supplemented by more detailed materials accessed through high visibility kiosks at New York State Thruway rest stops and destinations such as DestiNY USA in Syracuse.

At the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse we enjoy the mix of art and interpretive exhibits, and we get a good grounding on “canal basics.” We also appreciate the Old Erie regional overview exhibit which shows us all the different sites in this region and explains how they are connected. Working together at the touchable interactive regional model, we set our priorities for the week.

From our base in Syracuse we take day trips throughout the area. At each destination we discover something special, but National Heritage Corridor interpretive materials remind us of how each different site connects to the larger story of the canals, showing us how the pieces of the puzzle all fit together.

As we drive from site to site, we learn more about the remarkable history of our surroundings through lively and informative cellphone based interpretive programs. Plugging the phone into our car’s audio system brings us an aural tapestry of historic sounds, recreations and dramatizations, and expert explanations – all keyed to specific points along the way. Consistent and recognizable highway signage helps us find our way from site to site and lets us know when we’ve arrived.

The Old Erie Canal State Historic Park, which extends for nearly 40 miles along the towpath-era canal route from DeWitt to Rome, connects a wealth of interpretive and scenic destinations in the Old Erie region with walking, hiking, and bicycling trails. New York State Parks interpretive signage is complemented by Corridor signage, and distinctively designed “mile markers” locate our position within the park and along the entire length of the canal.

At Camillus Erie Canal Park, near the historic village of Camillus, we spend an afternoon hiking along the old canal towpath, now a recreational trail. An interpretive wayside graphic panel along the trail provides plenty of food for thought. It also reminds us that this is a National Heritage Corridor site. We visit the impressive Nine Mile Creek aqueduct and take a brief boat ride on the canal. The Sims Store Museum brings the canal era to life and includes a well defined National Heritage Corridor component that connects this place to the rest of the canal system and helps us decide what we want to do next.

We spend a wonderful day at the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, where construction of an actual canalboat replica is underway. Standing next to this impressive work in progress on the drydock, we can finally comprehend the scale of these handsome utilitarian vessels. Like the canals themselves, they are a testament to the principle that form follows function. Inside the adjacent museum we find exhibits that explain the boatbuilding process.

The Village of Canastota, arrayed along the banks of the old canal, provides a perfect complement to our day at Chittenango Landing. Here we come to appreciate the economic forces that prompted the construction of the Erie Canal, and the enormous impact of the canals on New York’s agriculture and industries.



Old dry docks at Chittenango

All along Canal Street, historical markers evoke the presence of once thriving enterprises and interpret historic buildings that still stand.

An interpretive kiosk in Canastota brings the bigger picture vividly into focus. Suddenly it becomes clear how a tiny town in central New York played a small but vital role in the formation of a distinctive American identity. Ripples of influence extend across the length of the canals themselves and beyond, linking the region and the state to the world.

On our last day we visit the recreated Erie Canal Village, in Rome. This is the only location along the canal where we can ride in a boat pulled by draft horses or mules walking ahead of us on the towpath. It's an almost magical experience, slow and stately, that weaves together all of the separate interpretive threads we've encountered during our visit to the Old Erie region. We're already making plans to return next year for a bicycle tour on the Erie Canalway Trail."

Summary Recommendations

In order to achieve this vision of an enhanced visitor experience, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners will need to collaborate on a sustained program of coordinated improvements. Over the short- to medium-term, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop and disseminate cohesive visit planning materials for the Old Erie region which incorporate the National Heritage Corridor designation and identity.
- Provide professional technical assistance to Old Erie sites and communities to enhance their ability to coordinate their separate offerings, and to improve the overall quality of interpretation throughout the region.
- Develop and install simple graphic panels or signs at all Old Erie sites which define them as part of the Corridor, and which encourage cross-visitation.
- Develop a long term strategic interpretive plan for the region which outlines a framework for development over a 5- to 10-year period, identifying specific goals and objectives, action items, and annual implementation benchmarks.