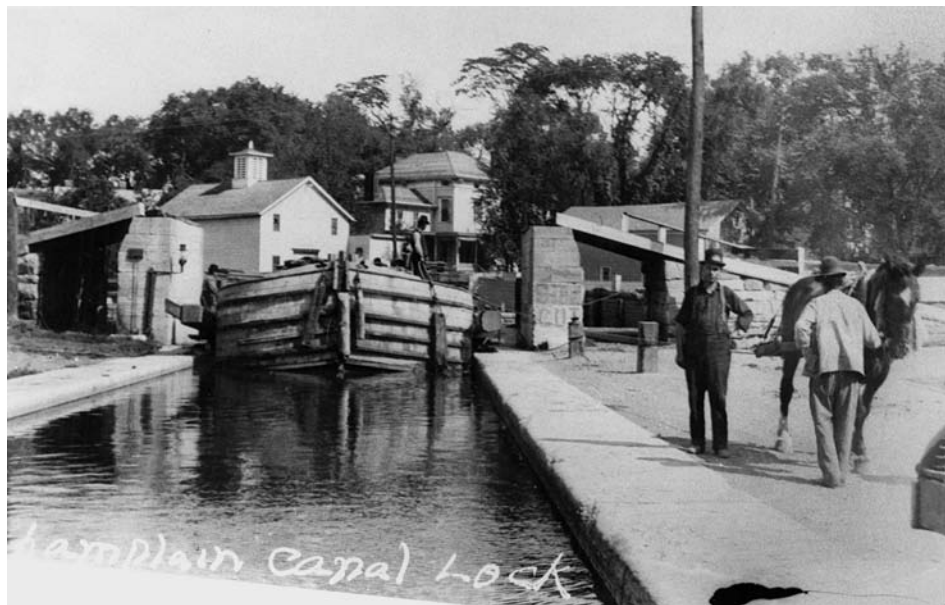


## THE NORTHERN INLAND PASSAGE





# The Northern Inland Passage

An Interpretive Guide to the Champlain Canal Region



by LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE

Crown Point, New York • Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. • 2019

This guidebook would not have been possible without the essential contributions of public historians, keepers of the region's stories: Maggie Brand, Town of Easton; Sandy McReynolds, Town of Greenwich; Charles Filkins, Town of Hoosick; Paul Loding, Village of Hudson Falls; Paul Loatman, City of Mechanicville; Georgia Ball, Mike Bilekiewicz, and George Hodgson, Town of Northumberland; Sean Kelleher, Town of Saratoga; Christina Kelly, Town of Schaghticoke; Linda Palmieri and JoAnn Winchell, Town of Stillwater; Carol Greenough, Town of Whitehall; Stana Iseman, Knickerbocker Mansion; Brad L. Utter, Waterford Historical Museum & Cultural Center; Kay Tomasi, Washington County Historical Association, Eileen Hannay, Rogers Island Visitor Center; Paul McCarty and Sandra Spaulding, Old Fort House, Fort Edward. In addition to historians, other residents were generous with their time and knowledge: geologists David De Simone and Don Minkel; Dave Perkins, Washington County Association of Snowmobile Clubs; the artist Harry Orlyk of Salem; Bonnie Hartley, Mohican Tribal Council; Frank Dean, Duncan Hay, Chris Martin and Christine Valosin, Saratoga National Historical Park; Craig Williams, New York State Museum & Archives and the New York State Canal Society; and Chris Fox, Fort Ticonderoga.

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INSIDE COVERS: 1820 map of the Champlain Canal from Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. (New York State Archives)

HALF TITLE: Champlain Canal sidecut, Waterford. (Waterford Historical Museum)

TITLE PAGE: New York Barge Canal Lock 2 and triple lock of the old Champlain Canal. Waterford, 1912. (New York State Archives)

BACK COVER: Saratoga Monument (Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce); Boats entering lock (NYS Canal Corporation); Anuszewski Farm, Easton. Lawrence White Photography courtesy of the Agricultural Stewardship Association ; Fly Fishing (Adriano Manocchia).

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For more detailed directions to sites described in this book, consult the free Lakes to Locks Passage Champlain Canal Region brochure available at visitor information centers, or visit [www.lakestolocks.org](http://www.lakestolocks.org) and [www.passageport.org](http://www.passageport.org).



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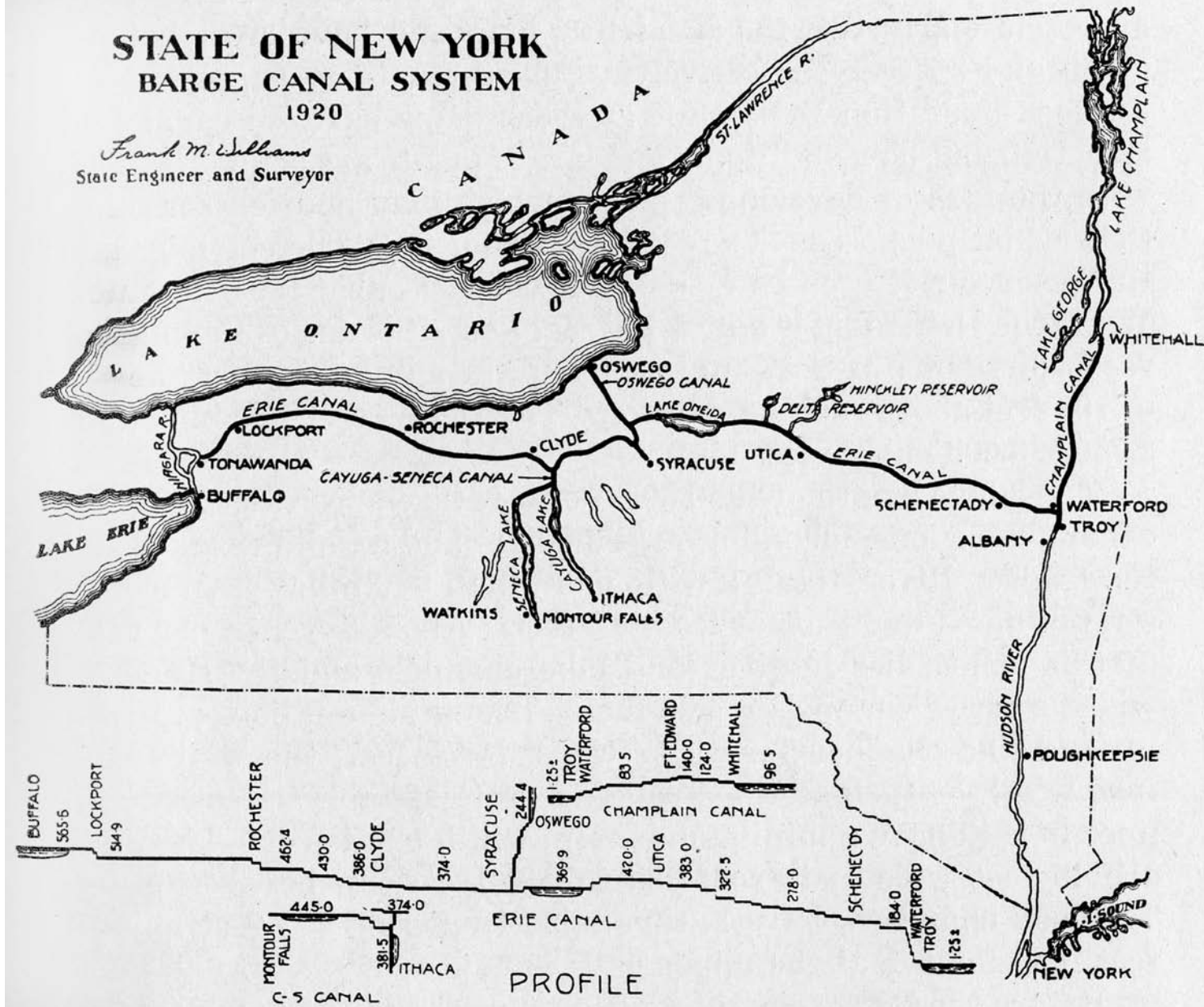
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# STATE OF NEW YORK BARGE CANAL SYSTEM

1920

*Frank M. Williams*  
State Engineer and Surveyor



1920 map of the Barge Canal System *History of the Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West 1614-1925*. S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1925. (Schenectady Digital History Archive)

# Natural Forces And Native Peoples

The Champlain Canal Region of the Lakes to Locks Passage stretches north from the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers to the headwaters of Lake Champlain. The 60-mile canal bridges the divide between two great waterways: Lake Champlain, which flows north to the Saint Lawrence River of Canada (via the Richelieu River and Chambly Canal); and the Hudson River, which flows south to New York Bay. With the construction of the Champlain Canal, a continuous waterway was formed, all the way from Long Island Sound to Canada.

## FORMING THE LAND

The Champlain Canal bridges another divide as well—a geological one. The bedrock on the west side of the Hudson River dates back more than a billion years to the original “proto-North American” continent. Terrain on the east side formed in a series of continental collisions separated by hundreds of millions of years of erosion. Wind and water wore down the mountains, carrying away vast quantities of gravel, sand, and silt. The accumulated sediments, in turn, formed new rock formations, as successive continental collisions compressed, folded, and uplifted



The geology map of this region shows the wide variety of rock types assembled by tectonic collisions over millions of years, then weathered by wind, water and a series of ice ages. (New York State Museum)

them. These mountain-building events added new land, assembling very different terrain into what we now know as New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

More recently, roughly 10,000 years ago, glaciers scraped across the land carving material off the hilltops and scooping out valleys, depositing this glacial till in new locations. As the ice melted, huge lakes formed behind the mounds of glacial till. When the glacial lakes overflowed, massive floods cut

new channels. A drive through the Canal Region of Lakes to Locks Passage, with a keen eye to the roadside, offers a view through more than a billion years of geologic time.

## Putnam Great Unconformity

A rock cut on the west side of Route 22 in Putnam reveals a missing layer, a gap in the geologic record known as an unconformity. The lower rock formation is almost 1.2 billion years old. The sandstone layer above is half that age. About 600 million years of geologic history are lost in the time gap between these two layers of rock. During that missing time, the layer of rock once there eroded away, and the land became submerged beneath a shallow sea. Then sandstone and sediments embedded with fossils of sea creatures were deposited. This unconformity circles the Adirondack Mountains, but the rock cut in Putnam is one of the few place where it is visible.



Section of the Putnam Great Unconformity. Figures for scale. Photo by Ron Schott



## Layers of Limestone

About half a billion years ago, during a major mountain-building time that affected most of modern-day New England (known as the Taconic Orogeny), two continental plates collided. Massive physical forces buried and compressed sea-floor sediments, transforming them into limestone and shale. A huge limestone quarry at Bald Mountain, on County Route 77 in Greenwich, exposes some of that ancient limestone/shale—which was once fossil-rich mud in shallow water on the continental shelf of North America. You can see this type of rock formation in the gorge of the Batten Kill below the bridge in Middle Falls. A similar formation called “Schaghticoke Shale” is exposed in the Hoosic River Gorge 15 miles further south.

## Stark’s Knob

When lava erupts underwater or flows into the sea, the lava forms a distinctive pillow shape known as pillow basalt. You can see a good example of this interesting formation north of Schuylerville. Stark’s Knob is a hill made of pillow basalt. It formed about 450 million years ago when the bulldozing effect of the Taconic collision caused magma to erupt into the shallow (and shrinking) sea. The eruption took place 100 miles to the east. Subsequent shoving in the later stages of the Taconic Orogeny pushed the feature west



Bands of gneiss in Fort Ann. Photograph by Virginia Westbrook

and above sea level. More than half of the formation has been mined for highway work, but a trail runs to the top of the Knob. This feature takes its name from General John Stark, whose New Hampshire Militia are believed to have occupied the summit during the Revolutionary War.



Pillow basalt of Stark’s Knob. (Hudson Crossing Park)

## The Sparkly Bands of Fort Ann

The rock cuts along Route 4, north of the junction with Route 22, between Whitehall and Fort Ann, reveal a rich variety of banded rocks called gneiss (pronounced *nice*).

Gneiss is a metamorphic rock identified by

bands of different mineral composition, color, and texture. These rocks formed approximately 15 miles deep in the earth, as part of the Taconic Orogeny. Squashed at high temperature and pressure, the molten mass recrystallized into rock so hard that steel cannot scratch it.

## Glacial Give and Take

Much more recently, massive sheets of ice put the finishing touches on this landscape. Between roughly 96,000 and 20,000 years ago, this land sat under more than a mile of ice. The last of three ice ages reached its peak just 22,000 years ago, as slow-moving glaciers scraped away rocks and soil from the surface. Melting ice dropped its load in piles, forming glacial lakes held in place by the piles of till left by the front line of the glacier's reach. For several thousand years, while ice still blocked the Saint Lawrence outlet, all the meltwater from the Great Lakes flowed southeast, carving the Mohawk Valley and the magnificent Cohoes Falls and Gorge.

Glacial piles and lake sediments have significantly contributed to the ways people use the land. Carried by running water from the melting ice of a glacier, deposits of sand and gravel more than 200 feet thick now provide gravel for highways, bridge abutments, and all sorts of concrete construction. Farmers depend on the rich silty, alluvial soil that collected on the glacial lake bottoms. A unique combination of fine sand and green clay deposited on the shores of glacial lakes in the Albany area proved perfectly suited for shaping intricately detailed iron castings, which account for the many foundries located here.

## FLOWING HIGHWAYS

Together, the Hudson River and Lake Champlain create a nearly continuous north-south waterway linking New York City with Quebec. Tributaries from these bodies of water also trace parallel, east-west routes, offering easier travel options through the rough, mountainous terrain and dense forests. Each river has special features as a result of the terrain it crosses.

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European explorers found the Lower Hudson so broad and majestic they believed it might provide a route to the Far East.

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### Hudson River

The Upper Hudson flows 167 miles downward from Lake Tear of the Clouds, in the heart of the Adirondacks, before reaching sea level at Troy—barely halfway along its total course. From Troy to New York City, the Lower Hudson becomes an estuary. The Mohican (or Mahican) people who lived by this body of water called it *Mahicannituck*, which means “the waters that are never still.” That’s because the ocean’s tide affects the Hudson River all the way up to Cohoes Falls. Tidal forces cause the waters of the Hudson to flow both upstream and downstream.

European explorers found the Lower Hudson so broad and majestic that they believed it might provide a route to the Far East.

Rapids at the junction of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers near Waterford and Cohoes prevented boats from going further upriver. To the north, rapids interrupted navigation at Schuylerville and Fort Miller, Crocker’s Reef, and Baker’s Falls, where the river drops 80 feet over the course of a mile. Indians paddling the river carried their canoes around the riffles and falls on paths called *portages* by the French or *carries* by the British. Fort Miller was known as the “Little Carrying Place” because it was used to overcome the falls in the Hudson.

At Baker’s Falls, the Hudson takes a sharp turn around the southern edge of Lake George before continuing in a northwesterly course to the central Adirondacks. Many travelers chose to take the more direct route to Lake Champlain, approximately 22 miles over land from Fort Edward to Wood Creek, a tributary of Lake Champlain at Fort Ann. This became known as the “Great Carrying Place.” The Champlain Canal later followed the route of this portage, creating a navigable connection between river and lake.





View of Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River by 18th-century Swedish-Finnish naturalist Peter Kalm. *Travels in North America*. Peter Kalm, 1773

## Mohawk River

The Mohawk is the largest tributary of the Hudson River. Glacial carving in the west left behind a broad river valley connecting the Hudson River Valley to the Great Lakes region, creating the only break in the Appalachian mountain chain north of Georgia's coastal plain. Native Americans established a

comfortable life along the Mohawk River. The ease of communication and travel surely helped bring the tribes together into the five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which controlled the waterway all the way from the Hudson River to Lake Erie.

As the Mohawk joins the Hudson, it splits into three channels called the "Sprouts of the Mohawk," from the Dutch term

*spuyten*, used by early mapmakers. At least eight small islands were formed by these channels. Portions of the sprouts were very shallow, two feet or less, and allowed for easy fording of the river. The town of Waterford got its name from the ford connecting the village to Peebles Island, a name which became popular through use by soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Three centuries of

construction, transportation improvements, and power dams have made this complex geography hard to figure out, but visits to riverside parks can help one understand the power of moving water and the many ways engineers have harnessed it. (See gazetteer entries for Waterford and Cohoes.)

## Hoosic River

The Hoosic (also known as the Hoosac in Massachusetts) enters the Hudson from the south-east. Its name comes from an Algonquian word, which can mean “the beyond place” (as in beyond the Hudson) or “the stony place” (perhaps because the river’s stony bottom is usually exposed). The Hoosic rises in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, flowing north into Vermont before turning northwest into New York, where it follows a wide westward arc before emptying into the Hudson below Schaghticoke, opposite Stillwater. The river cut deeply into old upland rocks before glacial ice scooped out its current U-shaped valley. Glacial debris deposited southwest of Hoosick Falls created Lake Bascom some 14,000 years ago. The lake persisted for about 800 years before draining away in a series of dramatic floods that scoured out a deep gorge at Schaghticoke and left today’s broad, fertile valley.

The Hoosic and its tributaries supported dozens of Indian communities. More than 40 sites where Indians lived in the summertime



Confluence of the Hoosic River with the Hudson. Drawing by Clelia Lion

have been identified between Hoosick Falls and the mouth of the river at Schaghticoke. The salmon that migrated up the Hoosic as far as the Owl Kill in Cambridge provided an important source of protein.

By the early 19th century, the falls along the Hoosic powered mills that brought prosperity to the towns growing up around them, especially Hoosick Falls and Schaghticoke.

## Batten Kill

From its headwaters in southwestern Vermont, the Batten Kill (or Battenkill) runs for 50 miles through the rolling valleys of Washington County, New York, before emptying into the Hudson River upstream from Schuylerville. The Mohican Indians called it *Dionondahowa*, a name recorded in 1709 as meaning “she opens the door for us into the mountains to the east.” *Kill* is an early Dutch word for a small waterway.



This narrow, shallow river has excellent fish habitat among its rocky rapids and cool pools, making it a world-class destination among fly-fishing enthusiasts. Brown trout and brook trout are favorite catches. Recently, paddling and tubing enthusiasts have joined anglers on the river. But the Batten Kill has also worked hard through the years. The river makes significant drops in elevation at 18 sites between the Vermont state line and Clarks Mills, where it meets the Hudson. Over the years, more than 80 mills or factories have harnessed these waterpower sites.

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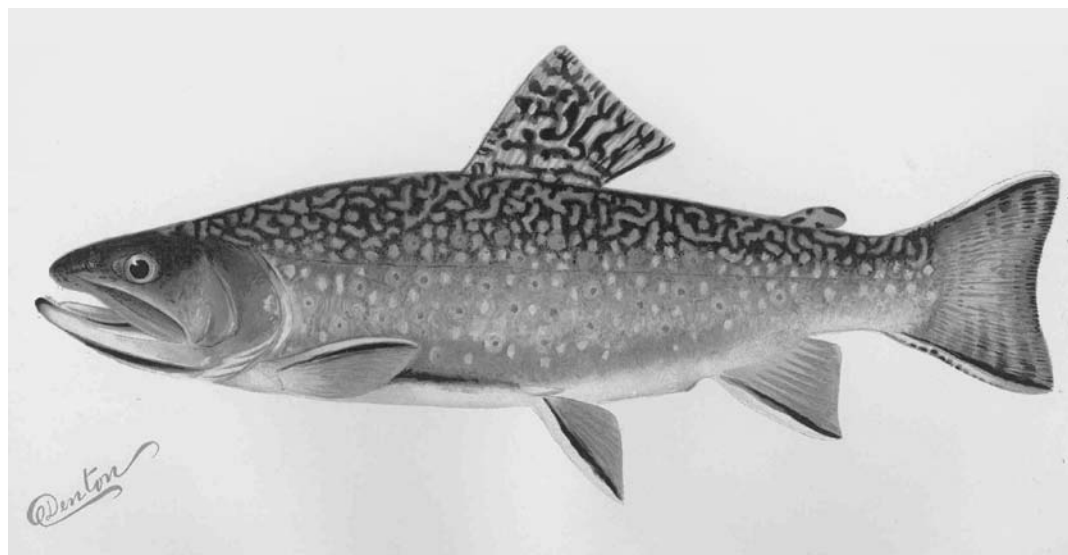
### Early Ecology Along the Batten Kill

When trout fishing declined in the Batten Kill in the mid-1800s, the state of Vermont enlisted George Perkins Marsh to study the problem. He determined that erosion from hillside logging caused trout spawning pools to fill with silt. He continued his study of river ecology in Europe and published his conclusions in *Man and Nature* (1864), earning him recognition as a pioneer of environmental conservation.

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### Fish Kill (Fishkill Creek)

The Fish Kill empties into the Hudson River almost directly across from the mouth of the Batten Kill, in present-day Schuylerville. Nathaniel Sylvester, a 19th-century historian, described this place as “a wilderness



Brook Trout. Drawing by S.F. Denton

crossroads.” With a portage around the falls at Victory, Native Americans could paddle Fish Kill to its source at Saratoga Lake. Then, by way of Kayaderosseras Creek, the Morning Kill, and Ballston Lake, head west to the Mohawk River at Schenectady. This long-distance Indian trail established Saratoga as an important crossroads.

Saratoga Lake provided a steady supply of water to the Fish Kill. The waterpower potential of the falls at Saratoga attracted Major Peter Schuyler to this place in the late 1600s. Schuyler, who was then mayor of Albany, cleared a spot in the forest and built a blockhouse in 1690, giving to it the name Fort Saratoga. He laid out a substantial plantation, raising flax on the river bottom

lands, grinding the seed into linseed oil, and manufacturing cloth from imported cotton.

### Wood Creek

Wood Creek flows north out of a chain of ponds in the northern portion of Washington County into Lake Champlain. Boats could only navigate the creek when heavy rain provided enough water. Early attempts to improve navigation involved dredging Wood Creek from Fort Ann to Whitehall. However, supplying enough water was challenging and the Old Champlain Canal had to follow a new route alongside Wood Creek.



## Lake Champlain

Lake Champlain shares its geological history with the Hudson River; both lay at the edge of the continent a billion years ago. During the last Ice Age some 25,000 years ago, the enormous weight of glacial ice caused the Earth's crust to sink, dropping the level of the lake floor. Then, when those same glaciers began to melt, they opened the Champlain Valley to salt water from the north. Once relieved of the weight of the glacier, the land rebounded, cutting off the connection to the St. Lawrence estuary. Rainwater and steady drainage from the surrounding uplands

gradually turned the lake from salt to fresh water about 9,000 years ago.

From its headwaters near Whitehall, the lake flows north for 133 miles to the Richelieu River in Quebec, which connects to the St. Lawrence River. Maps of the headwaters of Lake Champlain describe this region as “drowned lands” because the marshes that flank the narrow channel flood the land right up to the slopes of the surrounding mountains. The resulting marshes provide habitat for wildlife, including many varieties of waterfowl, frogs, salamanders, and the northern pike, which spawns in the protection of the still waters.



View of South Bay [Lake Champlain] from Death Rock, Whitehall, NY. (Griswold Library, Whitehall, NY)

## ANIMAL MIGRATIONS

The Hudson River and Lake Champlain create a ribbon of water that guides migratory birds along the Atlantic Flyway, one of four major bird migration routes across Central and North America. More than 300 species of birds breed, overwinter, or pass through the Champlain and Hudson valleys. Migratory waterfowl—Arctic brants, mergansers, golden eyes, canvas backs, snow geese, Canada geese, and many others—make their annual migrations through the Upper Hudson, as do many species of songbirds and raptors. Bald eagles and golden eagles, once on the brink of extinction in New York, can be spotted soaring over the Batten Kill in the winter months. The flyway contains a variety of important bird habitats, including the Saratoga Battlefield, 2,000 acres of grasslands in Fort Edward and Argyle identified as the Washington County Important Birding Area (IBA), the Drowned Lands of southern Lake Champlain, and the marshes and wetlands that drain into Wood Creek.

Each spring, shad, herring, eel, and salmon make their way up the Hudson and its tributaries to spawn. Dams built on the Upper Hudson and its tributaries keep many fish from completing their seasonal migrations north of Troy. Some fish make their way through the locks on the canal, but many cannot. In the 19th century, residents

of Victory gave migrating eels a helping hand by catching infant needle fish below the dam on Fish Creek and releasing them upstream. When the eel harvest exceeded local needs, they shipped the excess to New York City in canal boats fitted with baskets below the waterline to keep them alive.

## FIRST PEOPLES

The melting of the glaciers opened the way for the first people to come to this land. A little more than 11,000 years ago, they followed the migrations of big game across

a tundra environment at the melting edge of the last glacier. Archeologists have identified the fossils and bones of many species that the Paleo Indians hunted: bear larger than today's grizzly, giant beaver as big as a modern black bear, prehistoric camels (more closely related to llamas than today's camels), stag, caribou, moose, elk, deer, and American bison, which roamed a great part of present-day New York State. The remains of these, along with those of now-extinct horse ancestors, are often found mingled together with those of mammoth and mastodon, which the Paleo Indians also hunted for food.



*A Good Place to Set up Camp.* Painting by Greg Harlin, 2010. (Saratoga National Historical Park)

As plants and animals changed with the climate, American Indian cultures adapted. The mature forests of the Northeast supported abundant wildlife. People designed their stone tools to hunt smaller and faster game, learned to shape and fire clay into pottery vessels, and found ways to use plants growing in the woods around them



The Cohoes Mastodon in the New York State Museum in Albany. (NYSM)

### A Mastodon Meal

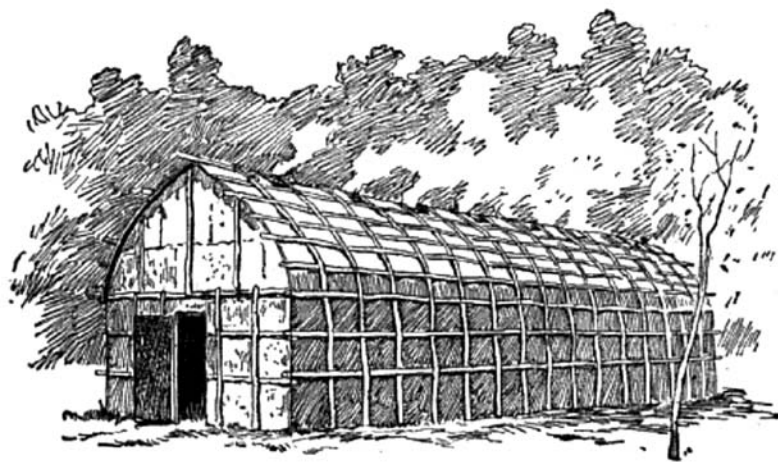
In 1866, workers digging foundations for an expansion of Harmony Mills at Cohoes discovered a huge number of large fossilized bones. A 50-foot-deep hole was filled with layers and layers of thick soil and muck that had accumulated over 13,000 years, burying the entire skeleton of a giant mastodon. Reassembled, the “Cohoes Mastodon” is a favorite exhibit in the New York State Museum. Forensic analysis revealed that the meat had been butchered with stone blades.

for household furnishings as well as food. Both Iroquois and Algonquin peoples have creation stories that include local features, indicating that they have always lived in this area. For example, the story of the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy over 800 years ago describes Cohoes Falls.:

When a great chief known as the Peacemaker walked among the Iroquois more than 800 years ago, his plan was to create the world's first united nations dedicated to the idea that human beings can live in a world without war. To accomplish this, he created a set of rules called the *Kaiienerekowa*, or the Great Law of Peace. This code not only provided the Iroquois with a constitutional form of government, but also directed them to reach out to other nations to present them with an opportunity to join together in a league.

The Peacemaker story identifies four sites. One is Cohoes Falls. There, the Peacemaker was tested by the Mohawks. They were intrigued by his message, but also a little skeptical, so they placed him on a tall tree above the falls. A branch was cut, causing him to fall into the fast-flowing waters. When he emerged unhurt and dry, the Mohawks knew he was indeed a prophet. They became the first people to join what became the Iroquois Confederacy.

Cultivation of maize (corn) did not begin in this region until about 1400. Corn was grown



Traditional Iroquois longhouse.  
*Stories of American History*  
by Wilbur Gordy. Charles  
Scribner's Sons, 1913

alongside beans and squash and provided the Native peoples a secure food source, but crops did not replace older silviculture (or tree management) practices: Native people used controlled fire to clear the forest understory for easier travel and visibility, which also encouraged deer to browse. The Indians also tended stands of edible and medicinal plants, and groves of fruit and nut trees. They gathered plant foods, such as hickory, butternuts, walnuts, acorns, chestnuts, and various berries to supplement their diet. Their forest-management practices resulted in park-like woods that dropped such an abundance of tree nuts that 16th- and 17th-century Europeans wrote home about it.

Hidden for centuries underground, stone and bone tools and pottery shards are occasionally unearthed during construction or farming. Farmers often turn up stone

points while plowing their fields, indicating the location of former Indian villages. Modern archeology has identified dozens of villages, seasonal camps, stone quarries, and tool workshops along the Hudson and its tributaries.

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### Unearthing History

Today, Native people from modern tribal groups such as the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Tribe (roughly 1,500 members, about half of whom now live on a reservation in Wisconsin) and St. Regis Mohawk, work with archeologists and federal agencies to recover artifacts and to protect cultural sites. The nation, though long removed from the Hudson Valley, has maintained an ongoing relationship with its ancient homeland.

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## EVOLVING INDIAN IDENTITY

Native people established a tribal culture organized by language groups and territory. Algonquin Indians lived throughout New England and eastern Canada. Six affiliated Iroquois tribes occupied much of New York State from the Hudson River Valley westward to the Great Lakes. The Mohawks occupied the river valley that still bears their name. The Mohican (or Mahican) people lived in the eastern Hudson River Valley. In winter, they gathered in villages, living in longhouses that sheltered several families. In summer, they set out in smaller groups up the Fish Kill and Batten Kill valleys and tributaries, where they could fish and tend their stands of trees and plants. They lived with abundance for thousands of years.

The area was home to several major Mohican settlements, including south Troy,



Devil's Chimney, Schaghticoke. Drawing by Clelia Lion

Peebles Island, and Saratoga. One Mohican village occupied the broad, open field that now surrounds the Knickerbocker Mansion, downstream from the Hoosic River Gorge at Schaghticoke. The village consisted of numerous longhouses, a council house, other structures, and an ancient burial ground. This resting place of many revered *Sachems* or wise leaders, along with a nearby natural limestone tower across the river, known today as “Devil’s Chimney,” was a sacred shrine for many tribes.

## TRAVEL NETWORKS

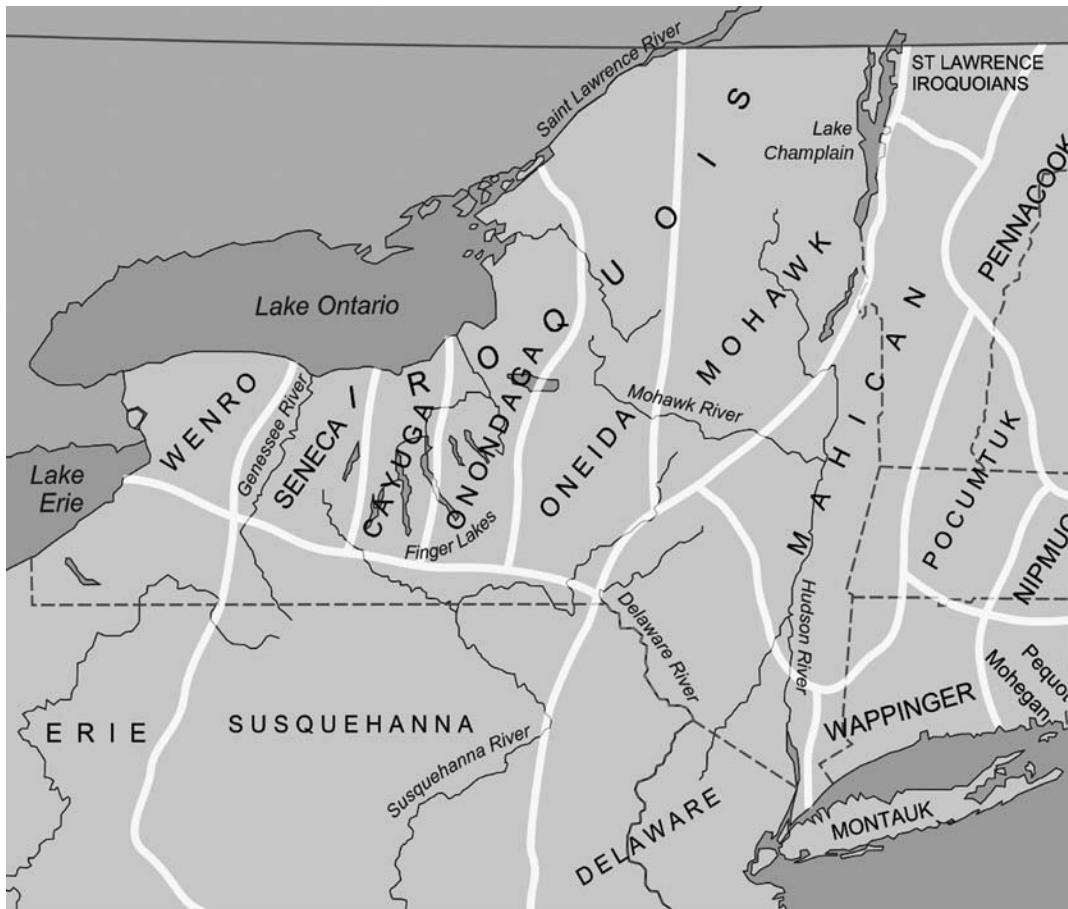
Where the Hoosic and Mohawk rivers meet the Hudson is a major Indian crossroads: Three major native pathways come together here: 1) The Hoosic River offers the main route east to New England, over the Berkshires and into Massachusetts. 2) The Mohawk River guides the way west. 3) The east side of the Hudson Valley provides a pathway north to Lake Champlain and Canada.

These well-worn trails, on which colonists later built their roads, linked the waterways used by Indian hunters, traders, and families moving between settlements. Stone, minerals, and other natural material from as far west as Michigan have been found in this region, revealing a broad network of trade among the Native groups, long before Europeans arrived.

Two other important trails intersected further north on the Hudson River: one where the Fish Kill and the Batten Kill meet the upper Hudson at Schuylerville and the other at Fort Edward, where the “Great Carrying Place” headed north to Lake Champlain. A major Native gathering place developed along the Hudson, downstream from Baker’s Falls (later called Hudson Falls). Travelers coming from the Hudson headwaters could meet up with others coming from Canada, New England, or the lower Hudson Valley. Traders mingled, bartered, and shared news from faraway places.

The four neighboring tribes—the Mohican, Mohawk, the Soboki Abenaki, and the Delaware—lived a life deeply connected to the seasonal migrations of birds, mammals, and fish that sustained them through long, cold northern winters, but they were also rooted in the places where food and medicinal plants grew. The areas they once called home are marked by place names throughout the Hudson-Champlain corridor: Schaghticoke, Hoosac, Horicon, and Escudahki (Schodack) were Mohican and Mohican-Abenaki town sites. Saratoga and Schaunactoda (Schenectady) were Mohawk settlements. Many streams in the region still carry variations of their Indian names.

Place names do not delineate territory, however. Inter-tribal struggles had been going on long before Europeans arrived, with



Territory of Indian tribes of New York State. (Wikimedia)

control of territories often going back and forth between tribes. Once the Europeans arrived, tensions only grew. For nearly two centuries, Native people traded, quarreled, and compromised with the demands of a growing population of newcomers. Many Indian warriors chose to fight on whichever side they thought would benefit them more.

But by the close of the 18th century, the remnants of once strong tribes—ravaged by European diseases, caught between wars of European conquest, and dispossessed of their lands—slipped away to less crowded places.

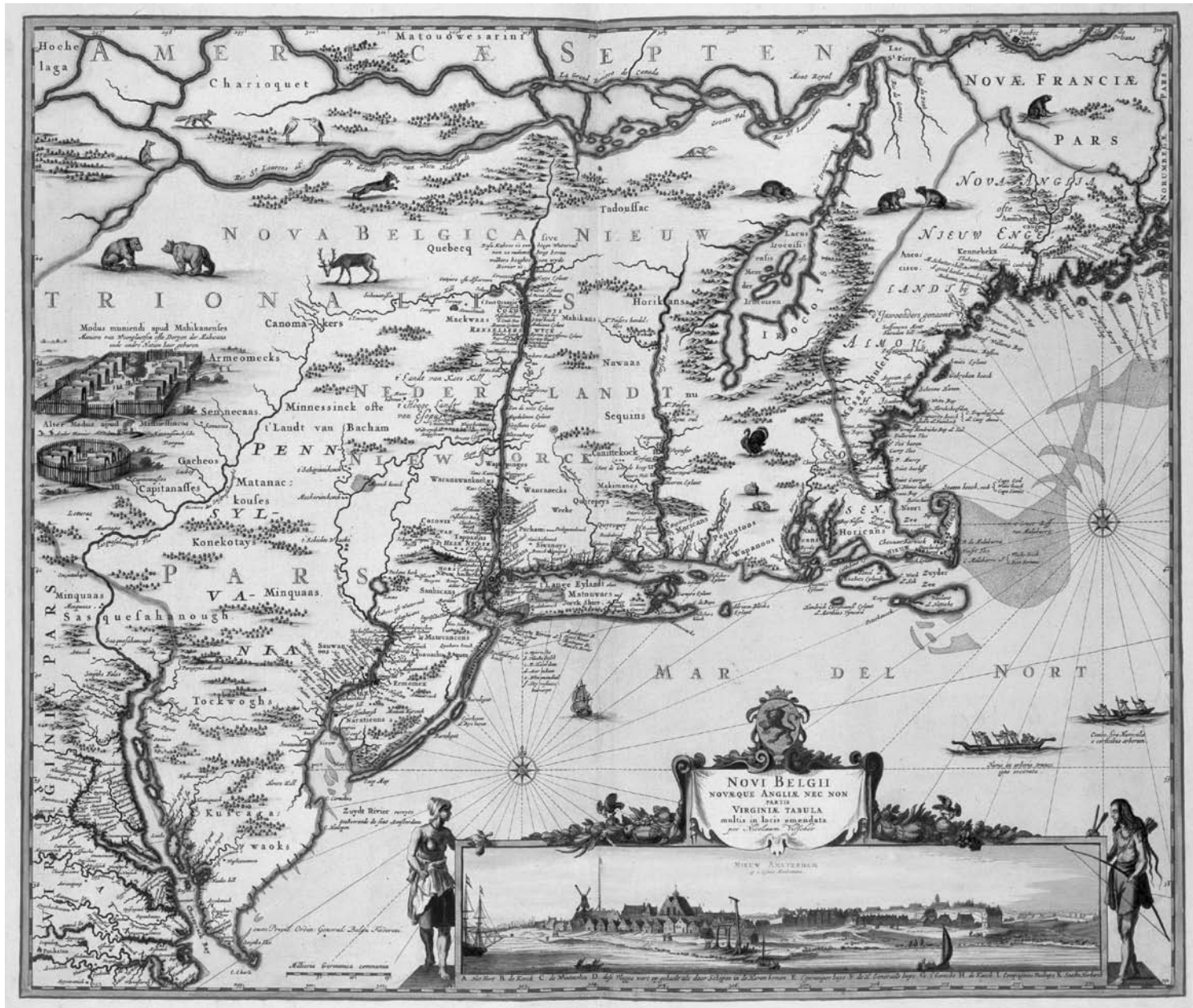
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### A Tradition of Military Service

Native people have continued to fight for their homeland in every war since the War for Independence. At their community powwows and gatherings, they honor military service, dating back to the Revolution.

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Today, descendants of Hudson River Mohawks live at Akwesasni, on either side of the St. Lawrence River. Many Abenaki live at two reservations in Quebec, Canada. Mohican people, known now as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians, carry on their ancestral culture on a reservation in northern Wisconsin. However far they have been forced to go, they have never forgotten their homelands and continue to return to the beloved *Mahhicannituck*. Bus trips pull in to the area regularly to visit important sites.



Map of New Netherland by Nicolaes Visscher II. (Dutch National Library)



## Laying Claims

Iroquois and Algonquin Indian nations have spent thousands of years developing complex neighboring societies, at times fighting each other for territory. When Europeans arrived, Native people readily traded with them and established mutually beneficial alliances. The Northern Algonquin Indians offered to accompany Samuel de Champlain on his expeditions if he would help them ward off the Iroquois, who threatened them from the west. Champlain, in turn, claimed ownership of just about everything he saw—the land, the lake, the rivers—in the name of France. Henry Hudson did the same for the Dutch. In fact, the Dutch East India Company sponsored his trip. And it was the (Dutch) West India Company that sponsored one of the earliest migrations of French-speaking Belgian Protestants, known as Walloons, up the Hudson to Fort Orange (now part of Albany).

New Netherlands—located in what are now parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware—became a culturally diverse colony from the very beginning of the 17th century. Dutch settlers laid the foundation for cities that still exist today. Just north of Fort Orange was Beverwijck, a center of the fur trade. Roughly



Indians trading beaver pelts. *History of the City of New York, Its Origins and Progress* by Martha Joanna Lamb. A.S. Barnes, 1877

50 years later, when the Dutch ceded control to the English, Beverwijck was renamed Albany.

### FROM DUTCH TO BRITISH

The Dutch arrived with trade as their objective, namely the furs of North American mammals. In 1615, the New Netherland Company established a fur-trading outpost called Fort Nassau on Castle Island, just south of present-day Albany. The Belgian Walloons arrived in 1624. Five years later, the Dutch West India Company chartered the Patroon System. Patroons were landholders with manorial rights to large tracts of land in New Netherland. The title of patroon

came with powerful rights and privileges. A patroon could create civil and criminal courts, appoint local officials, and hold land in perpetuity. In return, the patroon was required by the Dutch West India Company to establish a settlement of at least 50 families (or ship 50 colonists, depending on the source) within four years. The company first started to grant this title and land to some of its invested members to foster expansion of the colony. Eventually, the company allowed any Dutch American in good standing to purchase an estate. After the English takeover of New Netherland in 1664, the King of England continued granting large tracts of land, sometimes referred to as patroonships.

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### Powerful Patroonships

The Van Rensselaer Patroonship, established in 1629, was the largest and most successful of the Dutch family manors in New Netherland. Established by Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, it covered almost all of present-day Albany and Rensselaer counties and parts of present-day Columbia and Greene counties in New York. It survived both the British takeover and the American Revolution and controlled much of Albany and Rensselaer counties until the mid-19th century.

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Fur was a valuable commodity in northern Europe at the time because felt made from beaver hair could be molded into fashionable waterproof hats. Pelts from other forest animals could be fashioned into fur collars, muffs, and capes. By cornering the trade in pelts, the Dutch ensured that Holland would retain its position as the mercantile capital of northern Europe throughout the 17th century.

Eager for trade, Indian people welcomed the newcomers who offered marvelous tools and materials in exchange for furs. The West India Company kept a ready supply of axes, hatchets, knives, kettles, needles, and wool at their trading posts. They also supplied guns and spirits, which gave them an advantage



The beaver is central to this 1623 seal of New Netherland. (NYS Museum)

over the French traders to the north, who were officially forbidden from supplying goods that might imperil the Indians or their enemies. But neither the French missionary priests nor French governing officials could truly control what fur traders did.

Intense harvesting of fur pelts had negative consequences. It increased competition between the Mohicans and the Mohawks, who already struggled for control of hunting grounds. It also upset the delicate relationship between the Indian people and their environment. Traditionally, Indian families cared for their land, harvesting sustainably, practicing rituals of atonement and thanksgiving for everything they took. Trapping fur-bearing animals for export upset that balance of need and gratitude.

The English seized New Amsterdam from the Dutch in 1663, but the terms of surrender were generous and the transition peaceful. The Dutch capitulated, and most of the settlers chose to stay in the colony. In 1664, New Netherland became New York. A portion of Van Rensselaer's estate was taken to form Albany and the English took possession of the colony, which included New Jersey and Delaware. The political transition had little impact on daily life. A century later, much of the Hudson Valley population still spoke Dutch. Dutch architecture, place names, and cultural characteristics persist in the Hudson Valley today.

## ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

While the Dutch and English accomplished a smooth transition of power, Indians continued fighting territorial battles that had been going on for decades. A Mohican effort to regain control of land taken from them by the Mohawks left their strength so severely depleted that they refused to join their eastern Algonquin allies in fighting King Philip's War (1675-1676) —a war that marked the last major effort by the Native Americans of southern New England to drive out the English settlers. Following that bloody conflict, defeated Indian refugees fled west along the Hoosic River.

Edmund Andros, Governor of the Province of New York, saw this Indian exodus as an opportunity to thwart the territorial ambitions of Massachusetts. Many residents in Massachusetts believed their colony should extend all the way to the Hudson, so Andros invited displaced Mohicans, along with Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Skokis, and Nipmucks, to settle on the meadows between the mouth of the Hoosic River and Tomhannock Creek. He believed they would prevent squatters and act as a barrier against Indian raids from the north. This assemblage of Indian peoples became known as Schaghticoke.

Governor Andros negotiated peace with several Indian tribes. He then created a





Illustration of the Knickerbocker Mansion *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, December 1876

reserve on the west side of the Hudson and offered it to the Mohawks as a homeland. This, combined with the expanded settlement of Schaghticoke, created an early warning system for Albany in the case of hostile French and Indian raids from the north.

To cement the alliance, the governor convened a peace council in 1676. Representatives of the English Crown and as many as a thousand Indians, along with

Jesuits from the Mohawk villages, gathered to smoke calumet (peace) pipes and promise to keep the covenant made there. During the ceremony they planted an oak sapling—which became known as the Witenagemot Oak—and named the place “the Vale of Peace.” The tree stood for nearly 300 years. Although Schaghticoke Indians moved west, many have made pilgrimages back to this meaningful symbol of the pact.

### A Tree of Peace

The tree, planted in 1676, had stood for 100 years when Johannes Knickerbocker III built his house nearby. A century later, romantic historians gave the oak tree the name *Witenagemot*, meaning “Council of the Wise” in Old English. The ancient tree stood behind the Knickerbocker Mansion until 1949, when it was uprooted during a winter flash flood. Saplings of the original oak now grow in its place.

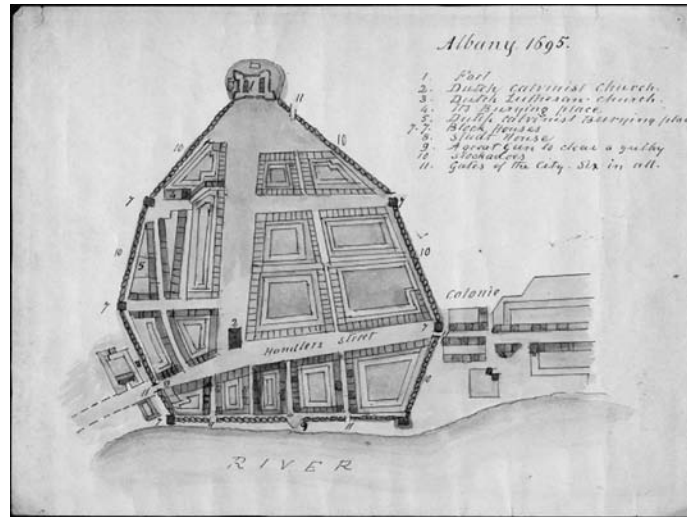


Late 19th- or early 20th-century photo of the Witenagemot Oak Tree. (Knickerbocker Historical Society)

## FRENCH AND BRITISH WARFARE

The wilderness land- and waterways used by Indians for generations eventually became military routes. British expeditions launched from Albany built forts along the way at Half Moon, Stillwater, Saratoga (Schuylerville), Fort Miller, Fort Edward, and Fort Ann. These expeditions were part of three different wars between the French and the British who were fighting for control of North America: King William's War (1689-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and King George's War (1744-1748). But the attacks did not stop when treaties were signed in Europe. The people of New England and eastern New York experienced the series of conflicts as nearly continuous warfare. They lived in fear of midnight raids. Captives taken during the raids were dragged back to Canada as prisoners. Those who were lucky enough to have their bounty paid still faced a long trip from Montreal to Quebec City, where prisoners were then shipped to Boston via the Atlantic—as travel back to the British colonies was easier by water.

During King George's War, the French began to focus more of their attacks on the colonists in the Hudson River Valley. Despite British efforts to bring defenders from other colonies to New York, it became more and more difficult to raise a garrison to defend and maintain the fort at Saratoga. In the



The "Fort" of Albany by John Miller, 1695. (New York State Museum)

early winter of 1745, a force of 600 French and Indians attacked the small settlement at the Hudson end of the "Great Carrying Place." At Saratoga, the French destroyed the Schuyler settlement, burning houses, barns, stables, four mills, the entire store of lumber, and the fort. The French raiding party took nearly 100 captives back to Canada, most of them African slaves. Ransom negotiations returned only 13 of them.

The following year, in 1746, work began on a new fort at Saratoga, named for Governor Clinton. But the geography offered no defensible location and the surrounding hills offered attackers a full view of activity in the fort. French soldiers raided the Saratoga fort four times during three years of warfare

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## Wilderness as Battleground

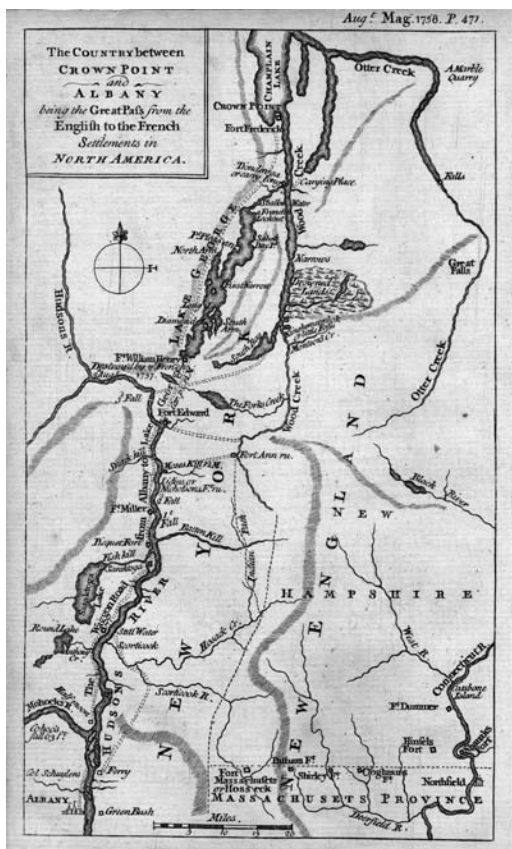
In 1664, when England took possession of New York from the Dutch, the long standing rivalry between France and England began to play out in the North American wilderness. Each time these countries declared war, the colonial forces joined with their Indian allies to attack each other's settlements.

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and systematically attacked settlements along the Hoosic River and south and west of Albany. The raids were so continuous and frightening that people deserted their farms all along the river. Albany filled with refugees. Only the truce between France and England in 1748 ended the four-year terror of what would be the third of four French and Indian Wars—also known as King George's War.

It wasn't just colonists that suffered. Indians living in the villages near Albany found it harder and harder to support themselves. Dutch farmers acquired or appropriated land and let their livestock invade Indian crop lands. Trapping no longer brought the income that previous Indian generations had enjoyed, and many found





The land between Albany and Crown Point was wild, as one traveled from English to French settlements. Phileas Gagnon, c. 1758. (Library of Congress)

it hard to pay the debts for goods they had received from traders. Third- and fourth-generation Schaghticoke left the Hoosic Valley. Some returned to their former Massachusetts and Connecticut homelands. Others went north to join Abenaki havens at Missisquoi or Odanak, while others traveled west to Ohio and eventually Wisconsin.

## PETER KALM'S TRAVELS

Peter Kalm, a student of the famed botanist Carl Linnaeus, traveled through eastern North America in 1749 and 1750. The Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences sent him on a mission to find seeds of useful herbs, trees, and other plants hardy enough to survive the Scandinavian climate. Kalm arrived in Albany just months after the close of King George's War.

Traveling through this still-volatile frontier, he reported on plant species, details of the daily lives of the people along his route, and paid particular attention to farming practices, making extensive notes on soils, crops, and yields. He recorded in his



Swedish-Finnish naturalist Peter Kalm. (National Archives of Sweden)



Bird illustrations by Peter Kalm  
*Travels in North America* by Peter Kalm, 1773

*“Several sorts of apple trees were said to grow very well here, and bear as fine fruit as in any other part of North America. Every farm has a large orchard. They have some apples here which are very large, and very palatable; they are sent to New York and other places as a rarity. People make excellent cider in the autumn in the country round Albany...”*

*Wheat is sown in the neighborhood of Albany to great advantage. From one bushel they get twelve sometimes; if the soil is good, they get twenty bushels... The wheat flour from Albany is reckoned the best in all North America. It is so plentiful that they make malt of that. The Dutch and Germans who live hereabouts sow peas in great abundance; they grow very well, and are annually carried to New York in great quantities...”*

– Peter Kalm

journal, “wherever I look on the ground, I find everywhere such plants as I have never seen before.”

All signs of civilization disappeared as Kalm's party approached Saratoga. They saw nothing but wilderness until they reached Fort St. Frederic (now Crown Point State Historic Site), nearly halfway up Lake Champlain. Learn more about Peter Kalm at [www.passageport.org](http://www.passageport.org).

## GLOBAL WAR REACHES THE WILDERNESS

When France and England next went to war, in 1754, their colonies became a major theatre in the world-wide conflict known as the Seven Years War. In North America, it was called the French and Indian War. It started deep in the Allegheny Mountains of what is now western Pennsylvania and soon engulfed the entire Northeast, from the Atlantic colonies to Fort Duquesne (Detroit). The Hudson-Champlain waterway, already a well-worn “war path,” became a major battleground in the struggle for European control of North America. Both France and Britain brought the strength of their forces to bear.

The British took the fight beyond their colonial frontier, rebuilding forts and reinforcing supply depots all along the waterway. They used the open ground along the Hudson River north of Albany, known as “the Flats,” as a mustering ground and began construction of a military road along the west bank of the Hudson River. Bivouac camps were spaced about ten miles, or a day’s march, apart: Half Moon, Stillwater, and two expanses of open ground known as “long Medder” and “the Fly” (from the Dutch *vly*, for overgrown swampland) north of Stillwater. At Saratoga, a new fort was built north of the Fish Kill and named Fort



British soldier Robert Rogers. (Library of Congress)

Hardy for New York Governor Charles Hardy (governor from 1755-1758). A stretch of rapids known as the “Little Carrying Place,” where supplies had to be unloaded and carried a half mile upstream, determined the location of Fort Miller.

Just below the first major waterfall on the Hudson, where the portage (also called the “great carry”) branched off towards Lake Champlain, British General Phineas Lyman

supervised construction of Fort Edward, whose 16-foot ramparts mounted six cannons and enclosed barracks and a magazine. A hospital and barracks were built on Rogers Island, in the middle of the river, where Rogers’ Rangers—the British army’s chief scouting and raiding force—made their camp. Today, exhibits at the Rogers Island Visitor Center tell the story of this important post, which supplied British movements through five summer campaigns and winter reconnaissance. Each ensuing campaign season took the war further north, from Fort William Henry, at the head of Lake George, to Ticonderoga (1758-59) and Quebec City.

By the terms of the treaty ending the French and Indian War, the French withdrew from North America in 1763. English control of Canada, New York, and the New England colonies brought a new sense of security to the region.

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### The Origins of the Army Rangers

*His Majesty’s Independent Company of Rangers*, led by Robert Rogers, became the British army’s chief scouting and raiding force during the French and Indian War. Rogers trained his “Rangers” in wilderness tactics, which he codified into *Rogers’ Rules of Ranging*, the basis of the Standing Orders taught to US Army Rangers today.

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## THE PATH TO NATIONHOOD

Peacetime brought people back to the countryside. Farmers from New England and the lower Hudson Valley first took up cleared land vacated by the Indians, then worked their way into Indian-controlled territory. Along the Hudson, populations clustered at the same places the armies had fortified or pitched their camps. Along the river's tributaries, millwrights and mechanics began to construct waterpower sites.

Philip Schuyler began rebuilding his family's plantation at Saratoga (Schuylerville) in 1760. Many other farmers did the same. In 1768, Albert Baker, who came to the area from New York City, gave his name to the village and falls that would become Sandy Hill—and is now Hudson Falls. Construction of the Knickerbocker Mansion, on the frontier in Schaghticoke, began in 1770.



Postcard view of Fish Creek with Schuyler House in the distance. (Saratoga Town Historian)

The British Crown granted large tracts of land to officers who had served in the war, as both a reward and as a strategy to encourage people with military experience to settle the area. One such officer was Philip Skene, who fought in the 1758 Battle of Ticonderoga. The following year, the British seized Ticonderoga and Crown Point from the French, and British General Jeffery Amherst appointed Skene as governor. Amherst encouraged Skene to establish a settlement where Wood Creek joins Lake Champlain. In 1770, Skene recruited 30 families to join him. He developed a center of industry at the head of Lake Champlain, in what is now Whitehall. A diorama in the Skenesborough Museum in Whitehall depicts the shipyard, mills, and forges that Skene developed.

Small settlements grew in Kingsbury, Stillwater, and alongside the Batten Kill. Groups of Quakers settled on both sides of the Hudson, in Easton and Quaker Springs. But peace lasted only a decade before the seeds of revolution began to sprout.

Barely 12 years after the British victory over the French in North America, the American colonists rose up in revolution against the British Crown. The first American victory of the Revolutionary War took place in May of 1775. In a dawn raid, Rebels caught the small British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga by surprise.

Further south in present-day Whitehall (then Skenesborough), Rebels also seized the



Keystone from the entrance to Philip Skene's house at the Skenesborough Museum. Photograph by Andrew Alberti



Diorama of Skene's mills, at the Skenesborough Museum. Photograph by Andrew Alberti

colonial estate of Philip Skene, including his house, mills, and forge. They used Skene's properties to build warships that would be used in battle against the British on Lake Champlain—thus providing Whitehall with the claim as the birthplace of the US Navy.

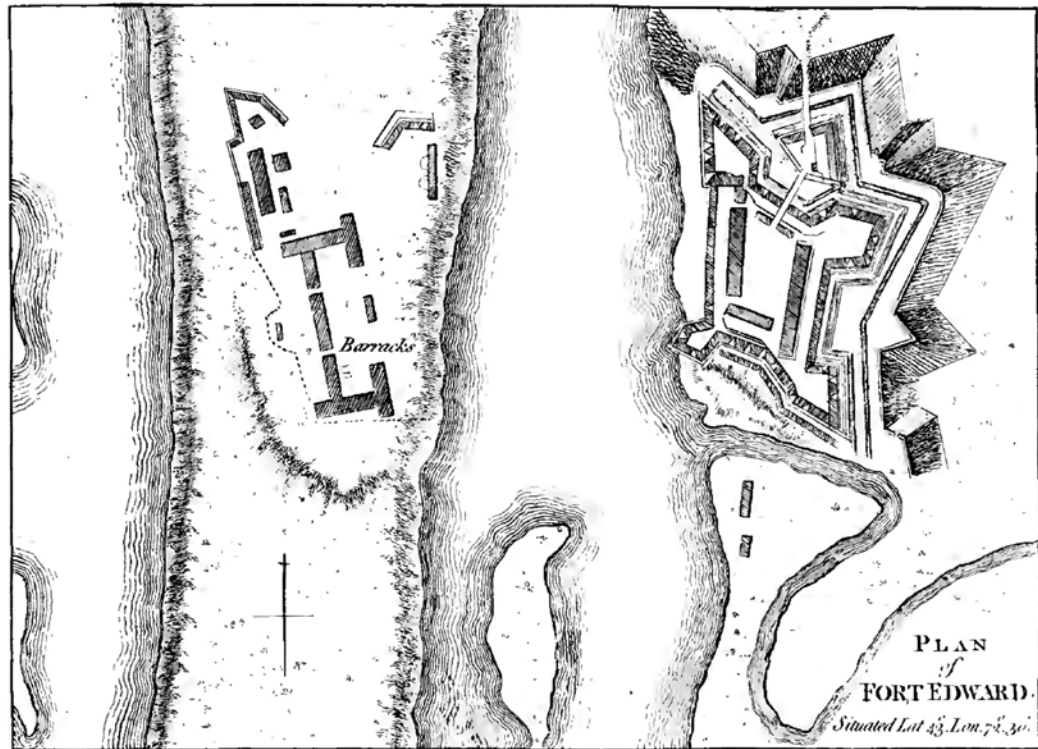


In December 1775, American General Henry Knox led an expedition to deliver 59 captured British cannons from Lake Champlain to Boston. The “Noble Train of Artillery” passed over Lake George, down the old Military Road, over the frozen Hudson at Albany, and across Massachusetts. The Knox expedition arrived on Dorchester Heights in time to drive the British from Boston on March 17, 1776. Today, you can find 56 Knox Trail monuments lining the route.



*Noble Train of Artillery* painting by Tom Lovell, 1946.  
(Dixon-Ticonderoga Company)

From 1775 through spring of 1776, the Americans launched a series of attacks on French Quebec from Lake Champlain. The sieges of forts in Quebec and naval battles on the lake forced the British to spend valuable



Map of Fort Edward on the Hudson River by John Rocque, 1762. (Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library)

time rebuilding and regrouping, giving the Rebels crucial time to rebuild their forces at Fort Ticonderoga.

Then, in June of 1777, General John Burgoyne led an army of British soldiers, German conscripts, Canadians, and camp followers south from Canada. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Americans hastily abandoned Ticonderoga and Mount Independence in the dark of night.

Burgoyne pursued the fleeing Rebels. The Americans felled hundreds of trees and

dammed streams to slow down the advancing British. The British army rested when it finally reached the Hudson River at Fort Edward. All were relieved to leave the rough wilderness behind them.

Things began to fall apart for Burgoyne in the early part of August 1777. A letter had made it past the Americans informing Burgoyne that British General William Howe was going to Philadelphia and was not going to assist him with his campaign as planned. To make matters worse, Burgoyne's

supply line was greatly overextended, and an excursion to capture food and provisions in Bennington, Vermont, failed.

By September, Burgoyne decided to continue southward, come what may. As the British marched into Saratoga, the Rebel Army, commanded by General Horatio Gates, moved to Bemis Heights, where fortifications were already under construction.

The two armies met in the early afternoon of September 19, 1777, engaging across farm fields a mile north of Bemis Heights. The battle ended in a tactical British victory. A second battle on October 7 took place on

Bemis Heights, ending in a decisive American victory. The Saratoga National Historical Park encompasses the British camp and both battle fields, accessible over a nine-mile tour road, with film and exhibit interpretation at the Visitor Center overlooking the park.

Following the second battle, the British retreated north, burning General Schuyler's farm at Saratoga, which Burgoyne had used as his headquarters. On October 17, 1777, surrounded by the American forces and running low on food, Burgoyne capitulated near Fort Hardy in present-day Schuylerville. It was a pivotal moment internationally

too. The American victory at Saratoga convinced the French to recognize American independence and to join in an alliance against Great Britain. The Lakes to Locks PassagePort, *Explore the Turning Point Trail* (at [www.passageport.org](http://www.passageport.org)) tells the dramatic story of the Burgoyne expedition from its optimistic beginnings in Canada to the laying down of arms at Saratoga.



*None Shall Make Them Afraid* painting by James Doyle Penrose, 1918. (New York Historical Society)

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### The Feather of Peace

In September of 1777, a party of Burgoyne's Indians came upon the Easton Quaker Meetinghouse. Seeing that the Quakers were unarmed, the Indians stacked their weapons and joined the silent meeting. The silence continued, and Indians and Quakers worshiped together in the little log room. When they finished, the leader said in broken English that they had come to kill. But when they found people worshipping the Great Spirit, with no guns or knives, the Great Spirit had told him not to kill these people. Then he took out a white feather and fastened the feather above the meetinghouse door. "Safe, all," he said, with a wide sweep of his hand to include all those present. "Indians and you — friends." Today, east of Barker's Grove, a white frame meetinghouse stands near where the log one stood in 1777. And there is still a white feather above the door. This oft-told story is a favorite of Quaker historians.

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## STARTING A NEW COUNTRY

Following the Revolutionary War, people returned to the settlements they had abandoned during the fierce campaign of 1777. Once again, the places fortified during the colonial wars—Stillwater, Saratoga, Fort Edward, Fort Ann, and Whitehall—became civilian communities serving the needs of a growing population. New settlements grew up around prime waterpower sites. Sawmills and grist mills served as magnets for other business, creating new commercial centers. Whipple City, on the Battenkill, became Union Village and later Greenwich. Schaghticoke's center of population shifted from the riverside meadows to the edges of the Hoosick River Gorge. Within a

generation, both places had cotton mills and other manufacturing operations.

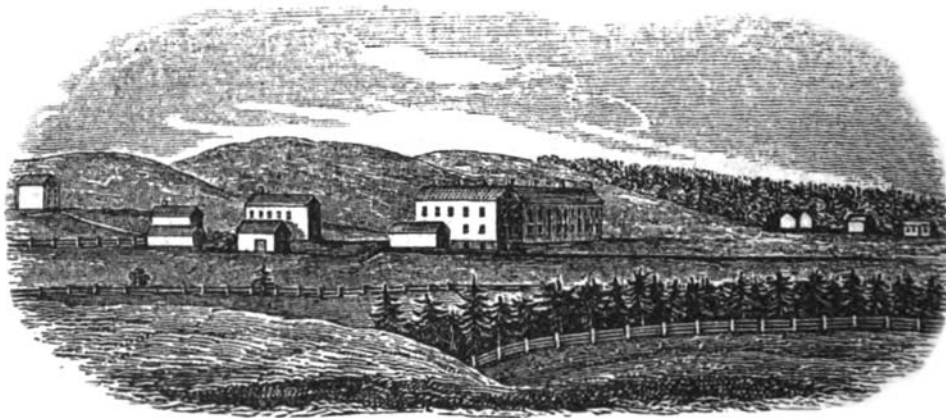
But world affairs interfered with the path to prosperity. As the Napoleonic wars dragged on in Europe through the first decade of the 1800s, both France and Great Britain attacked American ships in an attempt to control traffic on the Atlantic Ocean. In a desperate attempt to exert pressure on the warring nations, US Congress and President Thomas Jefferson imposed a complete embargo on foreign trade in December 1807. The economy of New York collapsed immediately. Resistance turned violent, and smuggling became rampant on Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario, and the Niagara frontier. The economies of France and Britain suffered very little.

Jefferson asked Congress to lift the embargo just before leaving office in March 1809. But British harassment continued. US vessels were seized, and sailors were forced into service on British ships. Three years later, the United States declared war on Great Britain for a second time.

## War of 1812

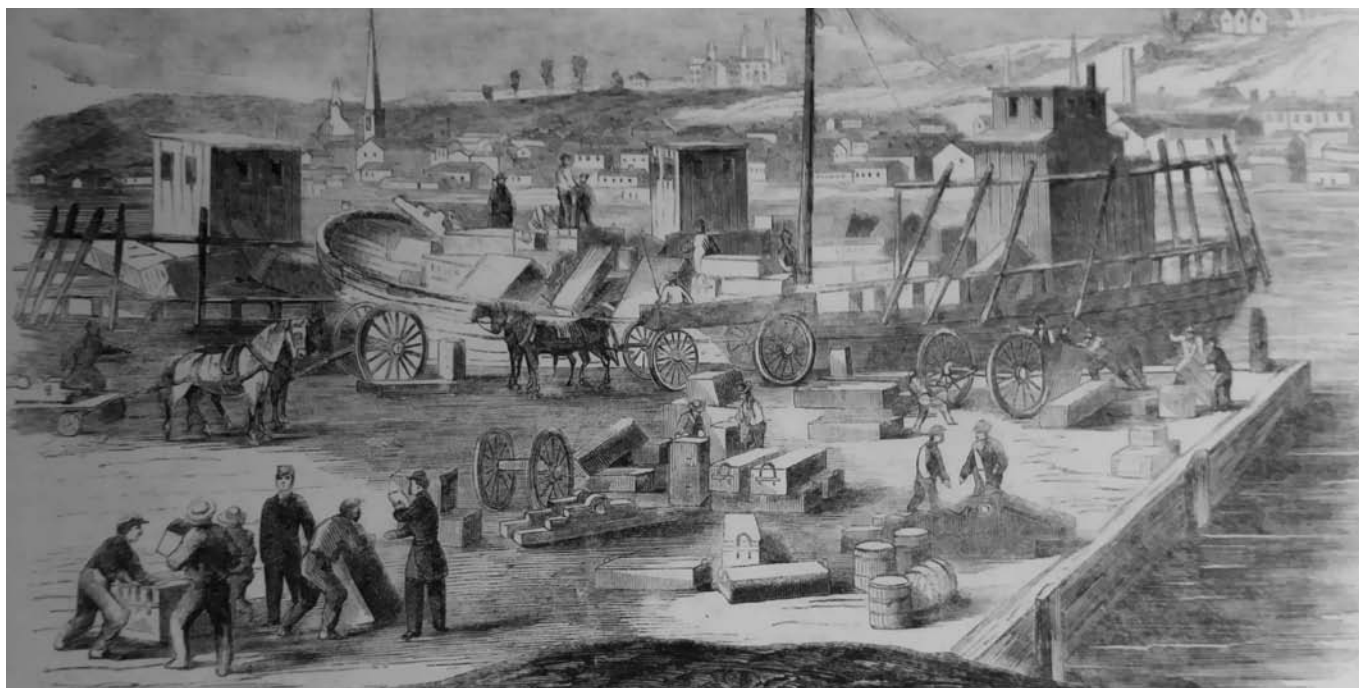
The War of 1812 took place primarily on the water: on the open ocean, the Great Lakes, and in crowded ports. The British invasion threatened New York from two directions: from Quebec via Lake Champlain and from Lake Ontario and Lake Erie via the Mohawk River. Consequently, the United States Army established an arsenal on the west bank of the Hudson, across the river from Troy. It was convenient because it was here the two waterways met, so the army could supply either approach.

The oldest continuously active arsenal in the United States, Watervliet Arsenal was built in 1813 to support the war efforts. It consisted at the time of two gun houses, a brick arsenal, officer and enlisted men's quarters, a hospital, and related security buildings. There, the army produced ammunition, gun carriages, sponges, wormers, and other artillery equipment. (In fact, it continues to produce artillery for the army today.) About 20 miles north of the



Fortified places, like this one depicted in *Remains of Barracks at Greenbush* (1840), became civilian communities after the Revolutionary War. *Historical Collections of the State of New York*. John W. Barber & Henry Howe, 1842.





*Shipment of Guns and Ammunition from the Watervliet Arsenal by Frank Leslie, 1860s. (Courtesy John Warren, New York History Blog)*

arsenal, a black-powder mill was established beside Tomhannock Creek, not far from the Knickerbocker house. It produced gunpowder for the United States Army for many decades, despite periodic explosions.

The troubles with Britain disrupted imports as well as exports. From the outset of the 1807 embargo, no one could import European china, glass, drapery, or dress goods. Deprived of manufactured goods and foodstuffs from abroad, American artisans had to produce the things they could no longer get. It turned out to be a good thing. When the war ended in 1814, the United

States was poised to launch its own chapter of the Industrial Revolution.



World War II recruitment poster and photo of the “original” Sam Wilson. (Wikimedia)



### From Butcher to Icon

The War of 1812 gave us our national icon. As the US Army took up a position at Greenbush, the government contracted with a Troy butcher for food supplies. Samuel Wilson—whose nickname was Uncle Sam—labeled the provision barrels “U. S.” When asked why, one of Wilson’s employees joked that it must stand for “Uncle Sam” Wilson. Images of Uncle Sam began to appear in the 1830s. But it was the great cartoonist, Thomas Nast, who drew the enduring visage based on Abraham Lincoln’s features during the Civil War.



Boats awaiting the opening of the canal in Waterford, NY. (Waterford Historical Museum)

# Corridor of Commerce

Following the war with Britain, people could begin to explore and evaluate the region's natural resources. Mining iron ore deposits and quarrying building stone became productive ventures. The dense forests of the Adirondacks seemed to offer an unlimited source of wood for an endless range of uses. Fertile river valley farmlands were capable of producing far beyond local needs. Merchants, farmers, and legislators believed that a canal would provide cheap transportation to distant markets that would help local agriculture and industry prosper.



Canal engineers and construction crew in Fort Edward. (Fort Edward Historical Association)

The Champlain Canal fulfilled the vision of its builders—as did the Erie Canal, which was dug concurrently from Albany to Buffalo. It linked the communities along its route to markets in places that didn't exist when construction began. It grew in response to commercial expansion, propelling the growth of manufacturing throughout the 19th century. What you see today is the final stage of canal evolution that began with mule power, followed by steam- and diesel-powered engines, and has culminated into a recreation corridor.

## THE CANAL ERA

Prospects for canal connections through New York State had been discussed for decades. Businessman Philip Schuyler studied the British canal system on a trip to England and Ireland in the early 1760s and returned with hopes that New York would improve navigation on the Hudson so that the output of his plantation at



Raised lift bridge at Waterford. (Waterford Historical Museum)

Saratoga could ship directly to the port of Albany. Elkanah Watson, who admired the ease of freight transport in France, Holland, and England, traveled across New York State in 1791 to plot a route connecting the Hudson River with Lake Erie. Schuyler championed Watson's proposal in the New York legislature, which promptly chartered the Northern and Western Inland Lock and Navigation Companies in 1792. However, the canal dream would not come true until after the War of 1812. Watson lived to witness the benefits of both the Erie and Champlain canals. Schuyler did not.

In their annual report for 1814, the state-appointed Canal Commissioners proclaimed,

*"...the communication long since contemplated between Lake Champlain and Hudson's river may easily be effected; and, thus, another of those great avenues be opened, which Providence has so well prepared, that little more is left for the State than merely to will the possession of wealth and power."*





Construction of Barge Canal Lock 2 at Waterford sidecut. (Waterford Historical Museum)

Both canals opened to shipping in just a few years: the Champlain in 1823, the Erie in 1825. They met where the Mohawk River reaches the Hudson, at Waterford. With frequent repairs and engineering improvements, both served for nearly a century before New York State replaced them with a larger, deeper Barge Canal in 1917. Revenues from the canals did, indeed, bring wealth and power to New York State. More importantly, they opened routes to the north and west that made New York City the most important port city on the Atlantic seaboard.

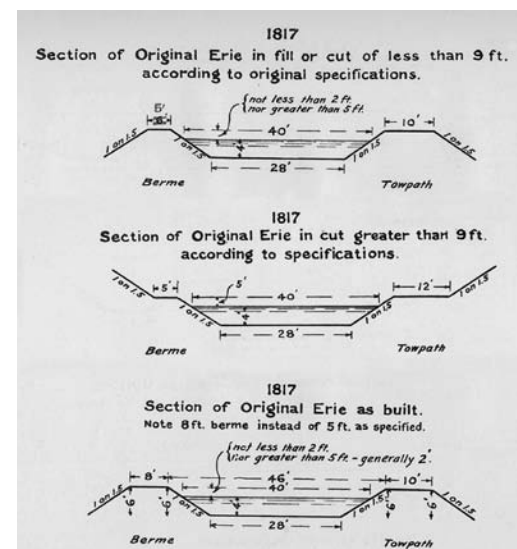
Translating the vision of a canal into a navigable waterway required a great deal of engineering expertise. Before anyone could dig a ditch or build locks and viaducts, surveyors had to determine the most level

route between Whitehall and Fort Edward. This section crosses the height of land that separates the Lake Champlain watershed from that of the Hudson. The canal required a ditch with an adjacent roadway for the mules to tow the boats. A series of locks accommodated the 40-foot rise from Whitehall to the summit in Kingsbury and the 100-foot drop from the summit to Fort Edward, where the canal joined the Hudson at the mouth of the Moses Kill.

Work began on the Champlain Canal in 1817, south of Whitehall. By the following year, 12 miles of canal and towpath were completed. Ox and mule teams graded towpaths with dirt excavated from the canal. By 1819, the canal was open from Whitehall to Fort Edward.

## The Shape of a Canal

The cross section of the Champlain Canal, called the prism, is a trapezoid, narrower across the bottom than the top. The prism of the Champlain Canal measured 40 feet wide at the water's surface, 28 feet wide at the bottom, and 4 feet deep. While canals can have various types of cross sections, the trapezoid shape allows for the maximum volume of water flow, so the water moves faster.



Cross section of the Erie Canal, which was the same for the Champlain Canal. (Wikimedia)

The original plan called for “slack-water” or open-water navigation from Fort Edward to Northumberland, with a tow path and a side-cut canal to bypass the falls at Fort

Miller. At Northumberland, barge traffic entered an independent channel that ran along the west bank of the Hudson, through Schuylerville, south past Bemis Heights to Stillwater and Mechanicville, ending at Waterford, to meet the eastern terminus of the Erie Canal.

The combination of water currents and rocks in the riverbed, however, made open-water navigation too dangerous. Work began immediately on an independent channel following the east bank of the river, completed in time for the second year of operation. (The canal did not run during winter.) By 1821, the canal extended south to the Fish Kill Aqueduct, south of Schuylerville. The aqueduct that carried the canal across the Moses Kill, south of Fort Edward, is still relatively intact. This new engineering solution required that boat traffic cross to the west side of the river at Northumberland. Engineers built an elbow-shaped dam just upstream from the rapids north of Schuylerville to ease the current and create a pool of quiet water for boats to safely cross the river. A towpath bridge located near where Route 4 now crosses the river allowed mule teams to tow the boats across.

The southern end of the canal presented even greater engineering challenges. A lock at Waterford connected to a long side cut leading to the Mohawk River. There, a dam across the northern outlet of the Mohawk formed another

broad “crossing pool.” Three more locks in Cohoes lowered the canal to Hudson-River level. Sections of the side cut survive in Old Champlain Canal Lock 5 Park in Waterford.

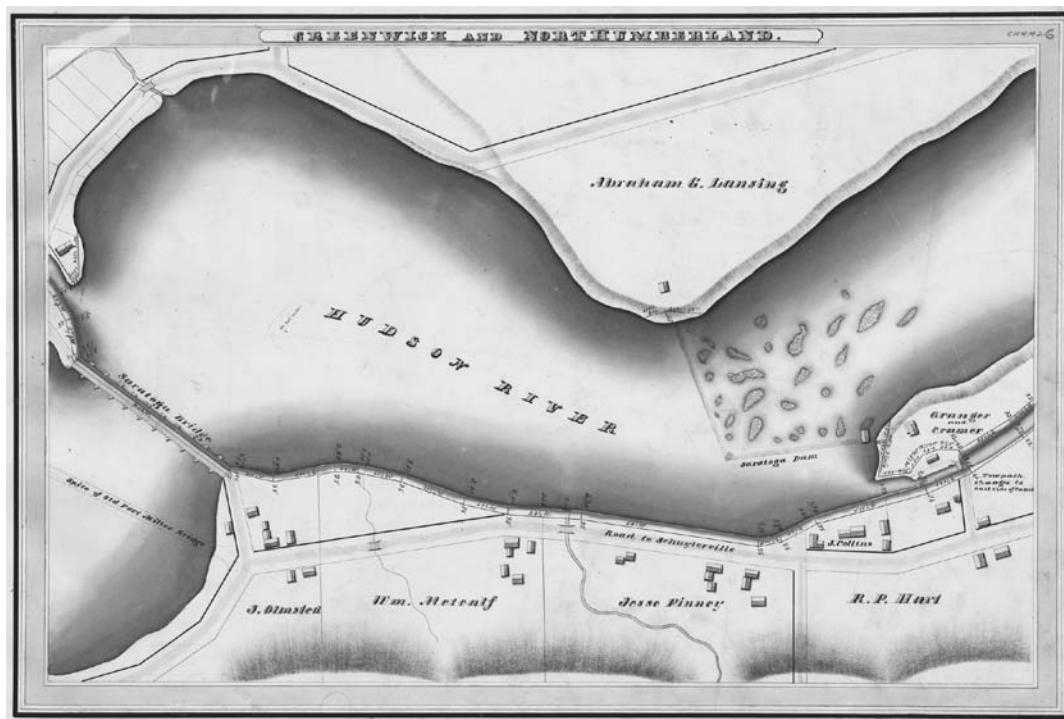
The Champlain Canal officially opened on September 10, 1823, the first segment of the extensive New York State canal system. Boats could travel 66 miles through 20 locks, from Cohoes on the Hudson to Whitehall on Lake Champlain, impeded only by bouts of low water, faulty lock mechanisms, a worn-out mule team, and, of course, frozen water in winter.

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### Educating Engineers for the Canal

When work began on the Champlain Canal, very few people had the engineering experience to oversee the work. In 1824, in response to this national need, Stephen Van Rensselaer founded what is now Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy to train engineers. The contributions of RPI graduates to regional industrial development were significant enough that some historians refer to this region as the Silicon Valley of the 19th century.

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This 1830 map of the Hudson at Northumberland shows the elbow-shaped dam (right) that slowed the current and the footbridge (left) that carried the towpath across the river. *Champlain Canal Survey* (New York State Archives)

## “WATERING” THE CANAL

Keeping the canal full of water was a major challenge for canal engineers. Lock gates, dams, and weirs within the canal regulate the water level. The pounds, or levels, between locks constitute the canal route itself, but they also store the water used to fill a lock (locking up) and to receive water when emptying a lock (locking down). Waste weirs allow excess water flow out into nearby streams. The grade of the canal—how quickly it rises and falls in the landscape—regulates water speed. Water flowed through the Champlain Canal at about one mile per hour on either side of the summit. The slower the flow, the more easily boats could travel against the current.



Halfmoon Waste Weir. (Town of Halfmoon)



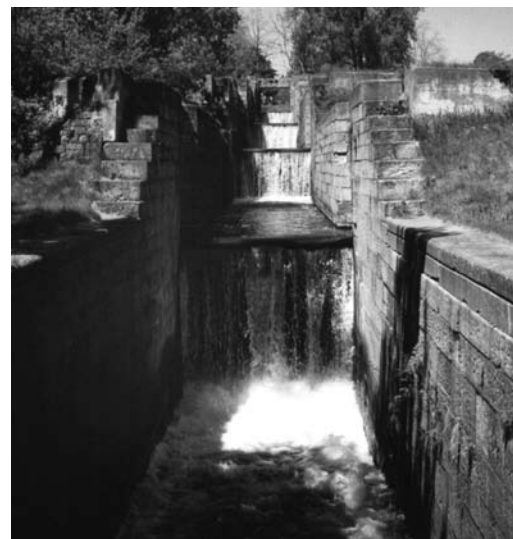
Canal boat *Jesse A. Pruyn* in Glens Falls. (Crandall Public Library Center for Folklife, History and Cultural Programs)

The summit level, where water drained away in both directions, was the most challenging section to fill. For a few years in the 1820s, a small canal diverted water from the Hudson at Fort Edward, but floodwaters soon swept away the dam that formed the canal. A new feeder canal brought enough water from a dam above Glens Falls to supply the six-mile-long summit between Smith’s Basin and the outskirts of Fort Edward. By 1830, the 17-mile feeder canal had been improved to carry boat traffic. Within a decade, stone locks replaced the original wooden ones.

The feeder canal expanded industrial site possibilities in Glens Falls and Hudson Falls beyond the banks of the Hudson. Stone yards, lime kilns, sawmills, lumberyards, coal silos, and warehouses sprang up along the feeder canal. Pulp and paper, lime and cement, apples and potatoes grown in the orchards and fields surrounding the canal—

all were shipped on boats made in local shipyards. The last commercial canal boat on the feeder canal, the *W.E. Boise* owned by Finch, Pruyn & Co., left Glens Falls in October 1928, with a boatload of paper destined for New York City.

Today, the Feeder Canal Alliance has restored the tow path for bicycle and pedestrian recreation. The nine-mile path begins at Hudson River Overlook Park in Queensbury. It then passes through Glens Falls and Hudson Falls, past the magnificent “Five Combines,” a flight of five locks that step down 55 feet to meet the Champlain Canal, and ends at Mullen Park in Fort Edward. Interpretive signs along the way explain the locks and the history of the feeder canal.



“Five Combine” locks at east end of Glens Falls Feeder Canal. (Feeder Canal Alliance)



## A Crucial Construction Innovation

Hydraulic cement is lime-based cement that can harden underwater. It was developed in New York State by Canvass White, who, in 1817, was sent to England by Governor Dewitt Clinton to investigate and report on the English canal system. In White's experiments with fired Hudson River limestone produced a natural hydraulic cement that was first used on the Erie Canal in 1818. White patented it in 1820. Over 500,000 bushels of White's hydraulic cement were used to construct the stone locks and aqueduct arches of the Erie and Champlain canals.

Canvass White and his brother, Hugh, moved their cement business from Chittenango in Madison County to Waterford in the 1820s to take advantage of the abundant waterpower and cheap transportation afforded by the Champlain and Erie canals. In 1964, the house that Hugh White built in 1830 was moved to the east side of Saratoga Avenue, overlooking Lock 5 Park. It is now the Waterford Historical Museum & Cultural Center.



The 1830 home of Hugh White is now the Waterford Historical Museum. (Waterford Historical Museum)



Schuyler Basin gave boats a place a pull off the canal. (Saratoga Town Historian)

## TURNING BASINS

The width of the canal allowed boats traveling in opposite directions to pass by each other.

Traffic kept moving, pausing only to change towing teams or when boats lined up to "lock through." Boats needed places to pull out and tie up whenever they had to stop to pick up or unload cargo. Much like rest stops on today's highways, turning basins along the Champlain Canal provided harbors and loading facilities.

Hamlets sprang up around each turning basin, with warehouses, hotels, taverns and stables, grocery stores, and other travelers' services.

Three turning basins served the summit level of the canal: one south of Whitehall and two in Kingsbury. Smith's Basin, on the road (NYS Route 149) from Kingsbury to Granville, had a population of 150, a hotel, wagon shop, railroad station, freight house, coal barn, produce warehouse, and lime barn belonging to nearby Keenan Lime Company. Dunham's Basin (on NYS Route 196, east of Hudson Falls) collected a smaller settlement around a toll house, hotel, grocery, mule barns, and potato warehouses.

On the Hudson River section of the canal, a turning basin at Schuylerville, (across NYS Route 29 from the Champlain Region



Hotel, store and residence of Ezekiel Smith at Smith Basin. *History of Washington County, NY*. Everts & Ensign, Philadelphia, 1878. (Fort Edward Historical Association)



Wilbur's Basin, Stillwater, NY, circa 1915. (Saratoga National Historical Park)

Gateway Visitor Center) gave access to factories running on the waterpower of the Fish Kill. Wilbur's Basin, north of Bemis Heights in Stillwater, had a post office, general store, and a plaster and sawmill. A tavern occupied the building that had been used as a British hospital in the fall of 1777.

Bustling communities grew up at cross-overs and intersections with east-west roads, where boats often stopped. At Whitehall, Canadian craft were required to transfer their cargo to American boats, and sailing canal boats tied up to remove or re-step their masts. The substantial hamlet of Northumberland grew up on the west bank of the Hudson, where the towpath bridge crossed over the river from Greenwich. The handsome brick bank building (at the junction of NYS routes 4 and 32) built by Jesse Billings in 1875 stands as the sole survivor of a place that built and serviced canal boats.

With the exception of Fort Edward and Whitehall, these places disappeared when the Barge Canal introduced much larger boats and bypassed the turning-basins, which were too small to accommodate these larger boats. Several structures still mark the locations of

Smith's and Dunham's basins, but Wilbur's Basin and the bustling community of Old Juncta, at the meeting point of the Erie and Champlain canals in Cohoes, have completely disappeared, along with the canal crews who gave these places the rowdy reputation of seaports.

## SHIPYARDS AND DRY DOCKS

Every community along the canal had one or two shipyards, many with dry docks, where boats could pull out for repairs. At one time, Whitehall had four. Fort Ann and Fort Edward had one each. Jesse Billings' boatyard in Northumberland was only one of his enterprises. He also operated a line of canal boats and shipped ice cut from the Hudson in winter. The boatyard in Schuylerville stood adjacent to the turning basin.

At the southern terminus of the Champlain Canal, John Matton's shipyard survived the transition to the 20th century to become the longest operating barge and tugboat builder in the country. When the Barge Canal bypassed the company's original location on the Waterford side-cut, the Matton family moved the business to



Ryan's boatyard in Whitehall, NY. (Gilchrist Library, Whitehall)



Van Schaick Island in Cohoes, where they built the next generation of barges, tugs, and police boats. Matton's shipyard built five submarine chasers for the US Navy during World War II and lighters and tugs for the army during the Korean War. Today, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is exploring possibilities for waterfront access and cultural activities.

## LIFE ON THE CANAL

On a standard dirt road, a team of four horses might haul a one-ton load 12 miles in a day. On the canal, however, a single horse could tow a 30-ton barge at a steady two miles per hour. Mule teams and horse teams, tethered to a 70- to 90-foot-long rope, towed boats through the canal. The length of rope kept the boat from being pulled sideways into the canal embankment. Drivers, often a boy called a *hoge*, walked behind the teams to guide them on the towpath.

Bridges at Schuylerville, Fort Miller, Fort Edward, north of Fort Ann, and south of Whitehall allowed teams to cross the canal when the towpath switched from one side



Mules hauling canal boat. (Fort Edward Historical Association)

of the canal to the other. The bridges were designed so that teams could cross without unhitching from the tow. Many cargo boats had living quarters for both crew and draft animals—stables forward, crews' quarters aft. Humans and animals would work two shifts per day in a six hours on/six hours off rotation around the clock. Horse and mule power was the standard until 1903, when the first steam tugboat made its way through the canal. Animal power disappeared when the Barge Canal opened in 1918.



Team of horses on a towpath along the Champlain Canal. (Image courtesy of the Metropolitan New York Library Council, Digital Culture of Metropolitan New York: Queens College, Waterways of New York and the New York Heritage Digital Collections: Waterways of New York database, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies--Queens College, CUNY)



Canal boat anchored in Champlain Canal. (Image courtesy of the Metropolitan New York Library Council, Digital Culture of Metropolitan New York: Queens College, Waterways of New York and the New York Heritage Digital Collections: Waterways of New York database, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies--Queens College, CUNY)

Old canal workers would say that if you could boat on the Champlain Canal, you could boat anywhere. Its upstream current, narrow route, and irregular lock dimensions made towing a challenge. As the Champlain Canal was the first American-made canal, it's possible that it was a learning process—lessons from which were then applied to the Erie and other canals. Early locks varied in size, so boat builders had to build to fit through the smallest locks. Boats were designed to fill the lock entirely in order to carry maximum cargo. Most canal boats were boxy barges, powered by mule, then steam tug boat, and later, internal diesel engine. The wooden canal schooners of the second half of the 19th century were larger than a modern tractor trailer and could carry more

cargo—five to ten times as much by weight and 25 percent more by volume.

The dimensions of the Old Champlain Canal were enlarged three times before the Barge Canal finally replaced it in the early 20th century. With each enlargement, improvements were made to the quality of the locks and the size of the prism. New classes of boats were then built to take advantage of the larger dimensions. Even so, after many years of northern winters, by the late 19th century, many stone lock walls, such as those at Bassett's Lock near Fort Miller, were leaning inward, causing a tight fit. In such places, a system of pulleys was sometimes used to hoist big boats into the locks.

People who worked on the canal called themselves “canallers,” which sounded more like *canawlers* in common parlance. Shipping companies hired single men who moved on at the end of the shipping season. Their



Replica sailing canal boat, *Lois McClure* built by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (Archive of Saratoga Town Historian)

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### The *Lois McClure*

In 2005, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum launched a replica of an 1862-class sailing canal schooner. The *Lois McClure* has traveled the inland waterways, docking at ports from New York City to Quebec City, providing visitors a view of life on this 88-foot-long canal boat.

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presence in terminal towns gave waterfronts the feel of a seaport. In contrast, boats owned by individuals supported whole families for a lifetime. Howard Pyle described the life of canallers in an article that he wrote and illustrated for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1896:

*“The boat is a floating home, and the captain carries with him his wife and his children, the cat, the dog, the canary-bird, and the potted plants. On the cabin walls there are framed chromo-lithographs in bright colors and on the cabin roof, there is almost sure to be a little garden flowering in old tomato-cans or starch-boxes or red earthenware pots.”*

The canal brought prosperity to the residents of the communities it served. For those who operated the boats that delivered goods to market, the canal was their home from April or May to “freeze-up” in early winter. Wherever they were when the canal closed, that was where they spent the winter.



Canal worker, Whitehall, NY. (Gilchrist Library, Whitehall)

Typically, families tied their boats together in fleets in Brooklyn, New York, St. Jean, Quebec, or some port in between. In many places, children attended their own school near the docks, crossing from one boat to the next to get ashore.

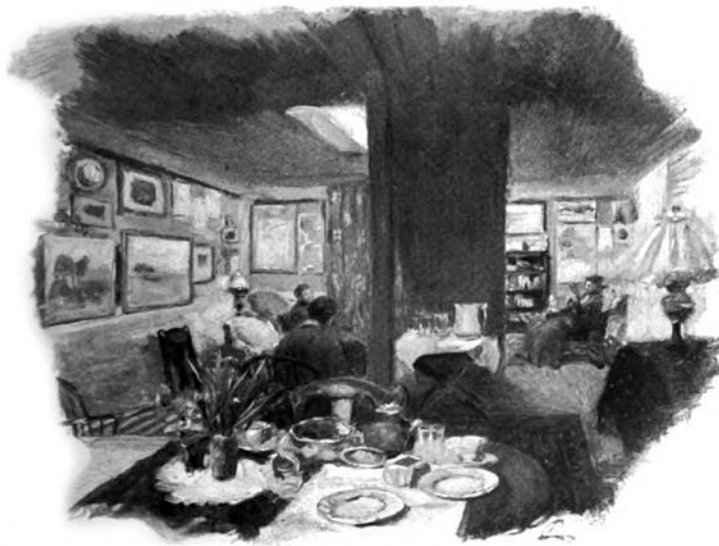


Canal boat cook. (Library of Congress)

## Travel on the Canal

Early canal boats moved only as fast as the mule teams could pull them, but the smoothness of the ride made travel on the canal much more comfortable than the bone-shattering ride on a stagecoach. Packet boats carried only passengers and baggage, with the cargo space fitted out with benches and a table for dining. At night, the space was divided by a curtain to give female passengers privacy. People slept on the benches or in hammocks. Since the boats only traveled a few miles per hour, passengers could get out and walk along the towpath in good weather.

People rode packet boats for both business and pleasure. Merchants from New York City often traveled to Albany and Montreal to conduct their business in person. Canadian families on their way west made up a considerable percentage of the passengers. They traveled south on the Chambly Canal to Lake Champlain, and then south on the Champlain Canal to connect with the Erie. Foreign tourists were common, as were wealthy people from the South who came north to spend the summer at places like Ballston Spa and Saratoga Springs. Many of these summer visitors brought their personal slaves with them. Some of those slaves slipped off the boats in the night, hoping to make their way north to Canada. Place names like “Nigger Marsh” in Putnam recall the terrifying reality of a fugitive’s escape along the waterway.



Comfortable interior of a packet boat by Howard Pyle, 1896. “Through Inland Waters,” Part II, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, January 1897

## ROUTE TO FREEDOM

New York abolished slavery in 1827, but a Southern slave could not simply escape to the North to be free. Under the Fugitive Slave Law, a runaway slave caught in the United States would be returned to bondage in the South. Abolitionists, many of them members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), provided transport and safe houses for runaway slaves on their way north to Canada. They called it the Underground Railroad.

Because of the secrecy necessary to protect the “stations” on the route, there is no true map of the Underground Railroad. Today many old houses are suspected of having secret rooms or crawl spaces for hiding

fugitives. Their validity is hard to document, but there is plenty of evidence of abolitionist sentiments in this region. Quakers who settled in Easton, Greenwich, and Quaker Springs, near Schuylerville, actively opposed slavery, as did many others.

Union Village, now the Village of Greenwich, was a hotbed of abolitionist activity. In 1837, the Free

Congregational Church formed as an antislavery church, in response to reports on the role that the Champlain Canal played in helping fugitives to safety. Across the Hudson, the Old Saratoga Anti-Slavery Society formed to unify the communities along the Champlain Canal. It invited leading abolitionist activist William Lloyd Garrison to deliver his eloquent, passionate argument for the rights of America’s black people at its meeting.



Union Village (now Greenwich) was a hotbed of antislavery efforts. (Fort Edward Historical Association)





Solomon Northup. Engraved by Nathaniel Orr, 1855.

Throughout the 1850s, the Albany Vigilance Committee, working from a modest brick house in Troy, arranged connections and passage for hundreds of escapees. Hiding in a shipment of goods, a slave might come from Virginia by water to New York City, then up through the canal to Lake Champlain and on to Canada. Many slaves were escorted by sympathetic whites or sometimes free blacks, who served as guides along the route. It will never be known how many fugitive slaves passed through the canal corridor, but clearly many doors were opened to them.

Solomon Northup, whose horrifying story of kidnap and bondage added fuel to the abolitionist fire, lived in Granville, Hudson Falls, and, for a time, in Fort Edward in the building that is now the Old Fort House Museum. He worked on the canal, rafting lumber down from Lake Champlain in summer and working on maintenance crews in winter. Taken by slave catchers in 1841, he spent 12 years toiling in the Louisiana bayou. His narrative, *Twelve Years a Slave*, was published in 1853. A feature film of his story came out in 2013 and won three Academy Awards.

The Stone Bench in Kingsbury has stood as a monument to the Underground Railroad for decades. Pictographs carved in the stone are believed to be a cryptic map to guide fugitive slaves to freedom. Slaves were kept illiterate by slave owners, so text would not have helped them. Acid rain has since rendered the pictographs illegible, but

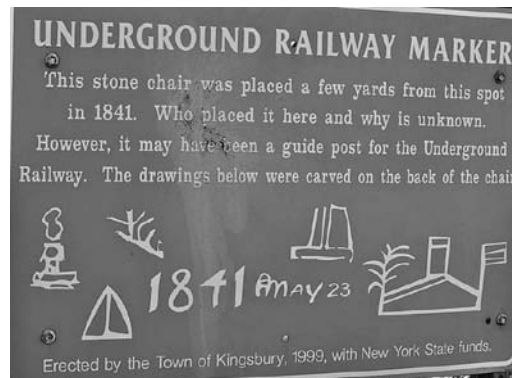
drawings made of the symbols in the 1930s are reproduced on a historical marker. One of the pictographs resembles a boat under sail, which has been interpreted by former Kingsbury historian Paul Loding to symbolize transport waiting on Lake Champlain.

## THE WORKING LANDSCAPE

English, Scottish, Welsh, and Dutch settlers came to this region expecting to make a living from the land as farmers. They encountered a countryside covered with timber in what appeared to be unlimited quantities. Beneath the forests lay bedrock rich with minerals, such as iron. The Champlain Canal provided a path to commercial markets around the world for these products.

## Agriculture

By the time the canal opened in 1823, farmers had been working the land through which it ran for two generations or more. They had recreated patterns of farming brought from their native lands, growing grain and flax for cash, vegetables and fruit for family use, and raising livestock for motive power, meat, and wool. Stone walls outlined fields. Farmsteads stood at the toes of hills or were tucked into protected valleys to preserve the best land for crops and pasture. Wood lots and orchards occupied the steeper slopes.



A marker depicting some of the pictographs that were once visible on the Kingsbury Stone Bench.



Argyle hayfield. Photograph by Deborah Austin.

The canal changed the nature of farming from subsistence to a market economy. Cheap, rapid transportation to New York and the Atlantic, and to Buffalo and the West meant that farmers could sell as much as they could produce. Access to distant places accelerated the mechanization of agriculture and provided cash income with which to buy the machinery that would make farming the foremost industry in the state.

By a peculiar accident of hydrology, potatoes became a major crop early in the

canal era. A vast swamp stretched across the height of land between Dunham's and Smith's basins, bounded by the canal and Wood Creek. Irish and Scottish immigrants drained and cleared the land, planting potatoes in the rich "muck soil" that had accumulated at the bottom of a glacial lake. They weeded the 15-square-mile plot with horse-drawn shovel plows and fertilized it after frost had hardened the ground.

The high-quality crop went to Long Island and New Jersey planters as seed potatoes

and a great quantity was shipped to Cuba. The greatest challenge was to get the potatoes to market before cold weather set in and froze the cargo. Canal men lined their barges with rye straw above the waterline for insulation. Construction of the Barge Canal put an end to the business when it blocked the drainage ditches, causing the potato fields to flood.

Another crop that had to get to its destination before winter was apples. Early farms included an orchard, often with several varieties for table use, but most of the crop was crushed and pressed into cider, which fermented into a potent and popular drink. As soon as the canal put distant markets within reach, apple production increased in the upper Hudson and Lake Champlain regions. Even French Canadian farmers in Quebec shipped their apples down the lake and through the canal.

Wool became big business just as the canal became a reality. Elkanah Watson, the man who foresaw the canal decades earlier, spent his middle years promoting agricultural societies and fairs as a means to improve farming practice through education and competition. In 1810, Watson held his first agricultural fair, just across the Massachusetts border in Pittsfield. County fairs and the New York State Fair can trace their roots to this event.

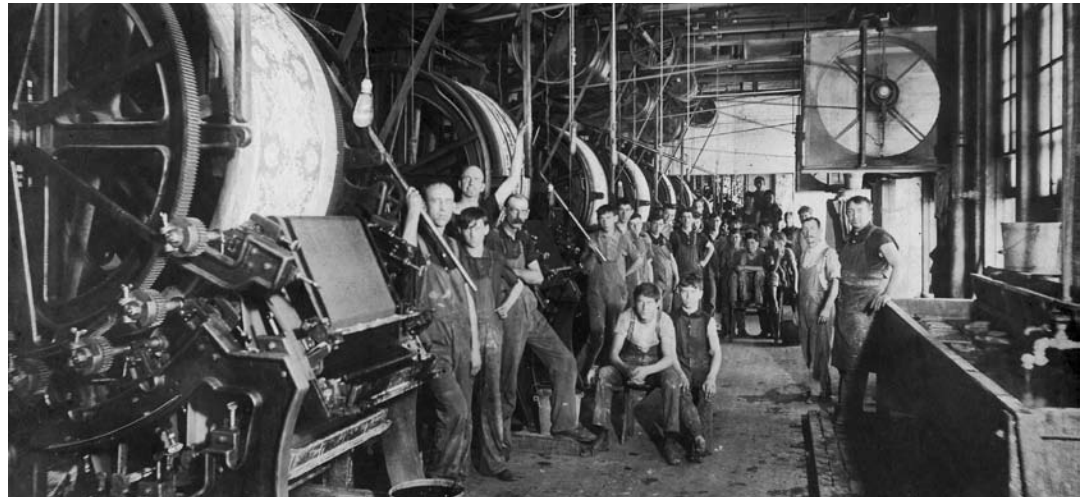
At that first fair, Watson exhibited two Merino sheep, recently imported from Spain.

Merinos grew long, well-crimped wool that brought a high price because it spun into soft, fine yarn that made excellent broadcloth. Local farmers who acquired Merinos and bred them with their hardy New England stock got a jump on the “Merino Craze” that swept the northeastern United States between 1810 and the 1830s. The magnificent Greek Revival style farmhouses along Route 40 in Easton, and elsewhere in Washington County, testify to the prosperity generated by the wool industry.

## Wood Products

Newcomers to the New World immediately recognized the value of America’s vast forests. So did the British Crown, which decreed all the white pine suitable for ships’ masts as Crown property. Surveyors cruised the forests, marking trees with “the King’s broad arrow.” No one could harvest those trees without a license.

Timber became the first crop harvested off the land. The sawmill, always the first mill built at any waterpower site, cut the beams and boards that made up every structure that followed. So every community began around a sawmill, followed closely by a gristmill and other small-scale industries. Canal transportation and a reliable water (power) supply would enable a highly diversified industry to supply the household needs of millions of people.



Paper mill workers, Schuylerville. (Saratoga Town Historian)

One of half a dozen saw and planing mills in Whitehall occupied a half-mile of frontage at the northern entrance to the canal. There, lumber from Quebec and the Champlain Valley was finished and forwarded. A sash and door factory in Whitehall and another in Sandy Hill (Hudson Falls) produced windows, doors, and decorative brackets. In Greenwich, a plaster and planing mill supplied other construction needs.

Following the Civil War, innovations in paper manufacturing made it possible to produce paper from wood pulp, providing a new market for northern forest timber. Schuylerville’s Liberty Branch of the Standard Wallpaper Company employed 200 people—mostly men and boys—turning out 50,000 to 60,000 rolls of quality printed wallpaper each year at the beginning of the



Mill beside the Hudson River at Hudson Falls, which used to be called Baker’s Falls. Painted by W.G. Wall; engraved by I. Hill, 1820s. (Library of Congress)

20th century. Bullard Paper occupied a prime location beside the Fish Kill adjacent to the Schuylerville turning basin. Two additional wallpaper factories were located across the river in Thompson and Clark’s Mills.





Iroquois Paper Mill, Thomson. (Greenwich Town Historian)

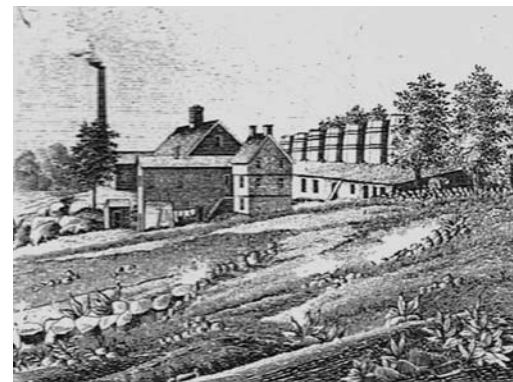
## Quarrying

The region's geological history left a stunning variety of rock formations suited to many commercial uses. Blue limestone from New York and marble from Vermont's Champlain Valley made up a large portion of cargo moving south along the Champlain Canal. Much more came out of Washington County quarries. Kingsbury Bluestone, from the west side of town, was used in the stone locks that replaced the original wooden ones during the first expansion of the canal in 1839. Both the Saratoga Monument and the one at Bennington are constructed of this fine building stone.

Other limestone formations provided quicklime for Portland cement. In the mid-19th century, Washington County had 12 limestone quarries. Two major producers removed thousands of yards from quarries at Bald Mountain in Greenwich and Keenan Quarry just east of Smith's Basin.

## The Town Lime Built

Robert Lowber built 11 lime kilns at the Bald Mountain quarry, supporting a big enough community to have its own post office. He is said to have constructed the first macadam-paved road in the region in order to carry wagonloads of lime barrels to the canal at Fort Miller Bridge. Near the bridge, he built a storehouse to keep the volatile material dry. The lime was used to fertilize fields and to make mortar.



R.W. Lowber's Lime Kilns at Bald Mountain. (Fort Edward Historical Association)



Postcard of a slate quarry in Granville. (Slate Valley Museum)

Over the course of half a century, the Keenan Quarry carved away more than a mile of ridge rock east of Wood Creek at Smith's Basin, feeding crushed limestone into a row of lime kilns at the corner of Route 149 and County Route 43. Rail cars delivered barrels of quicklime to warehouses beside the canal along an inclined track. Brakemen controlled

the cars on the way down; horses hauled the empty rail cars back to the kilns for reloading.

To the east lay another bedrock bonanza, a slate formation that ran from Hoosick Falls through Salem, to Granville, New York, and northeastward into Vermont. Slate companies in Granville hauled bundles of roofing slate 15 miles overland to



Parlor Stove  
manufactured  
by Fuller  
and Warren  
Company,  
Troy NY.  
(Rensselaer  
County  
Historical  
Society)

Smith's Basin to access the canal. Roofing slate shipped to Canada—by way of Lake Champlain, the Chambly Canal, and the Saint Lawrence River—all the way to the Maritime Provinces, as well as south and west to Buffalo and beyond.

Modern equipment has made it possible to cut and polish the hardest stone, creating a market for counter tops and decorative stone work. Today, several quarries along Route 4 between Fort Ann and Whitehall supply a variety of lustrous quartzite and granite for landscaping, building, and veneer applications.

## Mineral Riches

The dynamic geology of continental collisions produced valuable minerals: graphite in the mountains west of Lake George; garnet near

## A Perfect Recipe for Iron Production

All the ingredients needed to manufacture quality iron were available in the canal region: readily accessible iron ores, bountiful forests whose lumber could be made into charcoal to fuel the furnaces, limestone for flux, and fine-grained sand deposited by glaciers that was ideal for making smooth iron castings. The sand was rich in heat-resistant silica and had just enough clay (3-6%) to hold detailed shape and porous enough to allow gasses to escape. This Albany molding sand helped make Troy steel foundries famous.

the headwaters of the Hudson; and plentiful iron deposits in the western Champlain Valley. Loyalist businessman Philip Skene (who lived in what is now Whitehall) built the first iron forge in the region before the Revolutionary War. The iron ore was of high quality and abundant, and therefore extremely profitable.

During the 19th century, local furnaces smelted Champlain Valley iron ore into pig iron, shipping much of the output south through the Champlain Canal. Adirondack iron ore was loaded at docks in Port Henry, Crown Point, and other ports on Lake Champlain and sent south for the iron (and later steel) industries in Troy and Albany. Furnaces in Fort Ann and Fort Edward smelted pig iron from ore mined in Crown Point and Fort Ann.



Mount Hope Mining and Iron Company stock certificate.  
(Fort Ann Historical Society)



Eddy Valve advertisement.  
(Waterford Historical Museum)

Iron from this region helped the Union win the Civil War in the form of cannon balls, horse shoes, nails, and iron plates for the warship *Monitor*. The postwar demand for railroads to rebuild the South and move the country west fueled the tremendous success of the Burden Iron Company of Troy and Albany Steel and Iron Works—until the cost of transporting coal from Pennsylvania up to the Adirondacks gave steelmakers in Pittsburgh and Cleveland an insurmountable economic advantage.

## Working Water

Falling water provided power to run machinery. Thus, waterfalls determined the location of early settlements. Most places began with a sawmill and a gristmill, both doing business locally. But the unique topography of the upper Hudson Valley, with many streams flowing from high ground into a lowland navigation corridor, ensured that the region would grow beyond local markets into a modern manufacturing center exporting goods worldwide.

Waterford, Dec. 26, 1832.

*Valuable and Extensive*  
**WATER POWER FOR SALE,**  
*At Waterford, Saratoga Co. N. Y.*

**T**HERE is at this place, in the driest season of the year, water sufficient for the operation of 30 run of mill-stones, (the fall is about 16 feet,) near one half of which is now used in ten Establishments, to wit: one Cotton Factory, one Twine Factory, one Flouring Mill, two Saw Mills, one Iron Foundry, one extensive Printing Ink Manufactory, and three Machine Shops—all erected in four years past. The remainder of the Power, with convenient sites to build upon, is now for sale in fee simple, or lease in perpetuity, or for a term of years, in any quantity required. It is believed that no place in this northern country surpasses this in advantages for manufacturing, every thing being considered;—canal boats or sloops float to the site of the mills. There is in some of the buildings, convenient rooms and power to let. Persons calculating to erect new works, would do well to see this place before they locate elsewhere.

\* \* Land Transportation to and from many manufacturing establishments in the country annually costs four times what is asked for the rent of water power at this place.

For particulars, enquire of the subscribers.

FOSTER KING,  
JOHN F. KING.



The Champlain Silk Mill in Whitehall turned out silk ribbon and fabric until synthetic rayon became the preferred fabric in the 1940s. The mill closed in 1950s and the buildings burned in 1966. (Gayer Collection, The Canal Society of New York State)

In addition to mills processing raw materials drawn from the landscape, many more factories used the abundant waterpower to produce goods made from imported materials. Cotton mills in nearly every community produced cloth, underwear, and socks with cotton imported from the American South. Mills in Whitehall made ribbons and scarves of silk from the Far East. One paper mill in Fort Edward made twine and paper grain bags with manila hemp imported from the Philippines. All these factories found a ready labor force in European and French Canadian immigrants.

By the mid-1800s, steam engines that harnessed the expansive force of water vapor powered steamboats, trains, as well as factories not near falling water. But water

power was cheaper, more available, and the infrastructure for delivering it already in place. Before the end of the 19th century, dozens of paper mills had begun to produce their electricity, moving the hydropower industry forward dramatically.

The largest dam on the Hudson River was built to power paper production in Mechanicville, which helped West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company grow into the largest book-paper mill in the world. During the early years of the 20th century, electrical plants associated with paper mills also supplied electricity for municipal lighting and electric trolleys. Today, many of those facilities still produce electricity even though their parent paper companies no longer exist.



## RAILROADS COMPETE FOR TRAFFIC

About a decade after the Champlain Canal opened in 1823, the first railroads began to arrive. In 1835, the Rensselaer & Saratoga Railroad traveled north from Troy, over the first bridge across the Hudson, up through Waterford and Mechanicville. Horses pulled trains through the streets of Troy. Then the trains were hooked up to locomotives across the river on Green Island.



Ticket for the Stillwater-Mechanicville train line from Hudson Valley Railway. (Stillwater Town Historian)

The Saratoga & Whitehall Railroad was meant to connect with Lake Champlain, but fell victim to arguments among its directors about where to cross the Hudson. The financial panic of 1837 brought progress to a halt, leaving bridge piers for an 80-foot-high bridge standing in the river upstream from Baker's Falls. The railroad finally reached Whitehall in 1848, running parallel to the canal from Fort Edward northward. A 682-foot tunnel through Whitehall Village allowed trains to connect directly with steamboats at



The first Saratoga & Schuylerville Railroad car blazed along the tracks at 10 miles per hour. (Saratoga Town Historian)

Lake Station adjacent to the Whitehall Cliffs Natural Area. The train put an end to the packet boats that carried passengers on the canal from Whitehall to Albany.

A complicated series of railroad companies vied for routes and freight connections to the marble quarries in Rutland, Vermont, and to the slate deposits along the state border. Yet by 1868, the Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad Company controlled them all, including steamboat connections from Canada to Lake Champlain. Over the next few years, the mighty Delaware and Hudson Railroad consolidated many smaller companies, including the Rensselaer and Saratoga, into their unified transportation

empire that would dominate northern New York State.

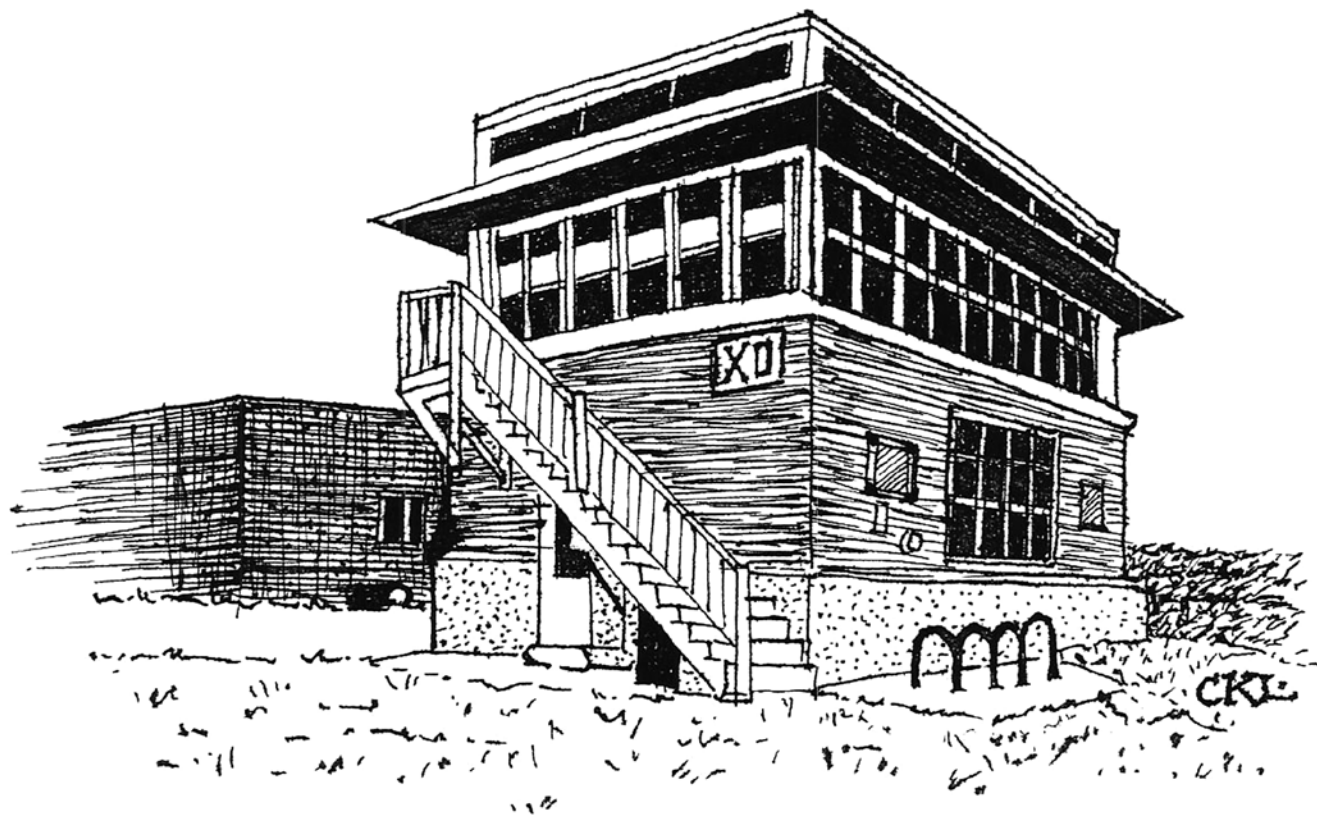
The canals allowed New York to control north-south and east-west transportation. As New York began to gain in the trade wars, business interests in New England looked for way to connect Boston's port to other areas across western Massachusetts—and to the Champlain Canal. In western Massachusetts, the nearly five-mile Hoosac Tunnel, dubbed the "bloody pit" by those who worked on it, took 25 years to build. It opened in 1876, creating a gateway to the west for the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel and Western Railway, which ran trains directly into Mechanicville. By 1887, 80 to 90 trains passed through the

tunnel each day. The Boston and Maine Railroad absorbed this line in 1900, at which time the Delaware and Hudson agreed to share operations and facilities at Mechanicville and Eagle Bridge.

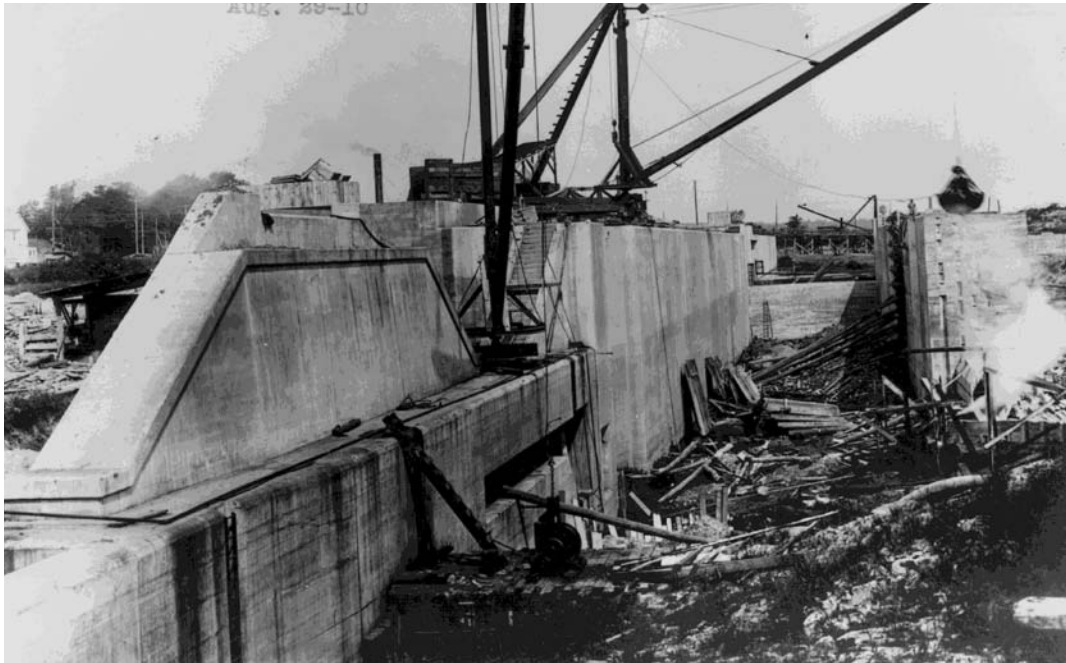
This arrangement changed the face of Mechanicville, called “Mickeyville” by trainmen, creating the third-largest freight transfer yard in the country. The yard

contained 60 miles of track, a full-scale roundhouse, repair shops, stock pens, and an ice house to stock refrigerator cars. A man-made hill in the middle of the rail yard, called a hump, sorted cars into new trains. Where the tracks of the D&H and B&M joined to enter the terminal, a two-story tower directed trains into and around the yard. Marked with the call letters XO, it is the only building that remains.

By the mid-19th century, railroads eclipsed the canal in volume and speed, transporting passengers and industrial goods. The railroad preferred to ship large quantities of goods from major producers. But the canal offered advantages to the small-scale shippers. A farmer could own a boat and ship his goods directly.



The Mechanicville XO Tower is now home to the Mechanicville-Stillwater Area Chamber of Commerce. A small exhibit about the railyard's history is upstairs. Drawing by Clelia Lion



Construction of Champlain Barge Canal Lock 5. (Saratoga Town Historian)

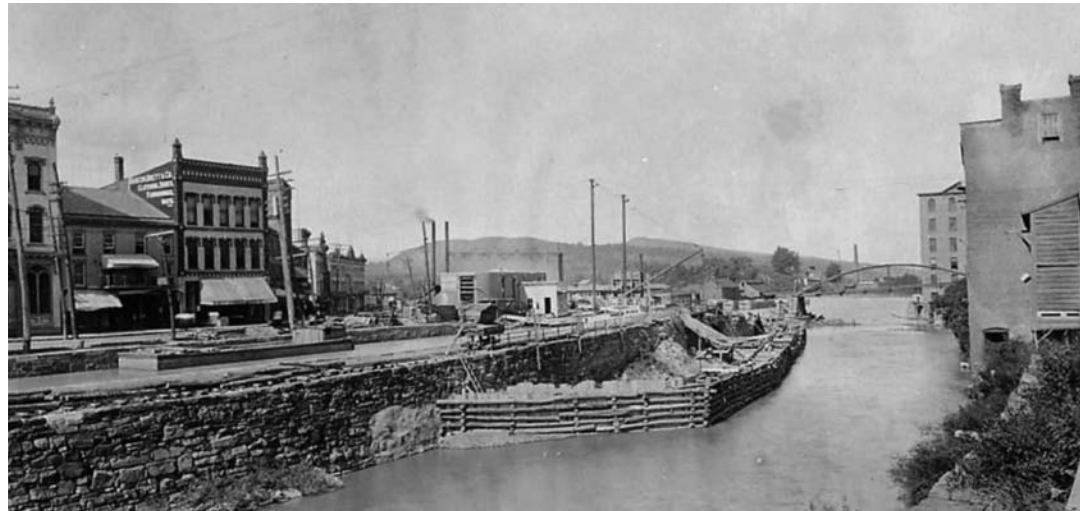
## NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL

In 1903, the New York State Legislature authorized a project to replace the aging Champlain and Erie canals with an improved and standardized canal system for New York State. Engineers of the new Barge Canal abandoned the artificial channel of the old canal in favor of a program to “canalize” the natural waterways. As much as possible, the new canal followed the lowest watercourses in the valleys. Dredges maintained a consistent depth. Dams maintained water levels at a consistent elevation, transforming

the rivers into a series of pools. Locks were built of concrete and steel, each equipped with its own hydroelectric power supply to operate pumps and gates to raise boats between levels.

Barge Canal locks throughout the state were built 45 feet wide by 325 feet long, with a minimum depth of 12 feet. Self-propelled motor ships designed to fill the locks could carry more than six times the cargo of towpath-era canal boats. The new canal did not have a towpath, so boats needed mechanical propulsion. Fleets of barges lashed together were either towed by a tug or driven by one self-propelled boat.

Work on the Barge Canal began at Fort Miller in 1905. Italian immigrants made



Construction of the Barge Canal in Whitehall. (Gayer Collection, The Canal Society of New York State)

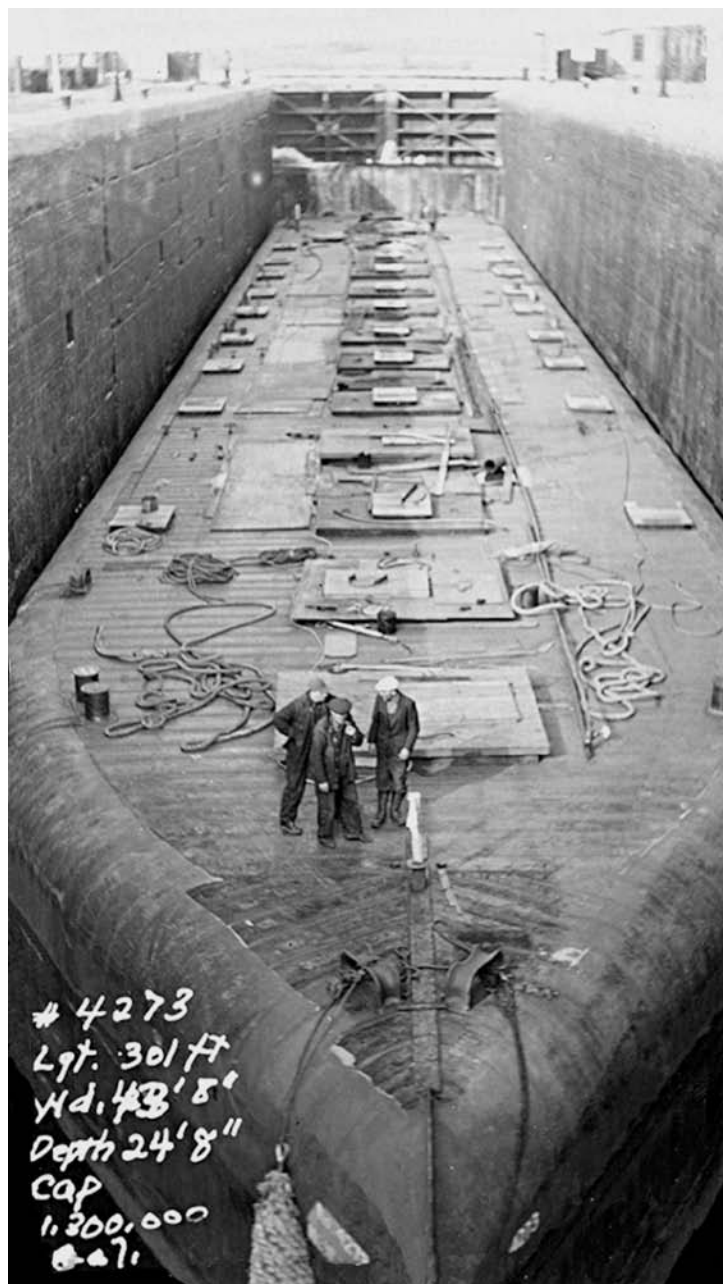


up much of the work force, many of whom stayed on after the project was done, finding work in the pulp and paper mills or farther north in the quarries and mines of the Adirondacks and the Slate Valley. Miles of new canal were dug to replace the summit level of the old canal. The Champlain unit of the Barge Canal System, which includes all New York State canals, opened in 1916, just in time to aid the transportation demands brought on by World War I.

Commercial traffic peaked during the 1950s. In the second half of the 20th century, canal use declined steadily until the only cargo was jet aircraft fuel for the Air Force base in Plattsburgh, which closed in 1995. In 1992, responsibility for managing the canal shifted from the New York State Department of Transportation to the Canal Corporation, a new division of the Thruway Authority. Now, the canal serves as a 62-mile recreation resource.



New York Governor Whitman opening the Champlain Barge Canal. (Waterford Historical Museum)



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### Building the Barge Canal

According to a New York Canal Society oral history from Jim Petty, local residents recalled that “Fort Miller was a regular madhouse during construction of the Barge Canal. There were about 300 Italians camped in a field. When they blasted, the rocks would fly all over, and they had a crew that went around just repairing chimneys.”

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Tight fit for oil barge on Champlain Barge Canal. (Waterford Historical Museum)



Scene on the Champlain Canal near Bemis Heights, N. Y.  
The Valley famous as the seat of the Battle of Saratoga  
in Revolutionary Days.

Canal traffic near Bemis Heights, Stillwater. (Stillwater Town Historian)

# Magnet for Tourism

As settlement moved northward and westward, more and more Americans left home to explore the new world that spread out before them. Visitors from abroad published journals of their travels. Prominent Americans did the same. Reverend Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, made several tours of New England and New York between 1798 and 1817, recording his observations as a series of letters. In 1821, his nephew, Theodore, published his uncle's travelogues, *Travels in New England and New York*. He then went on to produce many editions of his own guidebook, *The Northern Traveler*, between 1825 and 1866. His guidebook introduced the first generation of American tourists to their history, culture, and spectacular scenery.

Artists took their brushes and pencils into the landscape to depict the dramatic scenery, spending summers on sketching trips to the lakes and mountains. Painted panoramas of spectacular places introduced city people to the natural wonders of the country. Hudson River School artists painted landscapes, juxtaposing the exhilaration of wild places with the pastoral order of villages and farm fields. Inexpensive prints and engravings

brought images of the Catskill Mountains, Lake George, and other gems of American scenery into people's parlors.

## SEEING THE COUNTRY

Travelers flocked to the packet boats that could carry them up the Hudson River, through the Champlain Canal at a walking pace, and out onto Lake Champlain. Theodore Dwight published the first edition of *The Northern Traveler* just as the Erie Canal opened the way to Niagara, and two years after the Champlain Canal opened. His book supplied the stories to go with the living panorama passing by. Following the example of the Grand Tour of Europe, Dwight's tour directed travelers to the natural spectacles, the centers of culture and the places where important historical events took place.

Travelers who left the canal boats to visit the battle grounds at Bemis Heights followed in venerable footsteps. George Washington had made an inspection tour of the "Northern Department" in 1783. He visited with Philip Schuyler, who gave him a tour of the battlegrounds and entertained him at his farm at Saratoga. A decade later, future presidents Thomas Jefferson and James

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## The Earliest Tour Guides

Timothy Dwight gave Americans a vocabulary for appreciating the landscape: "The whole effect of this scene may be arranged under the heads of grandeur, variety, wildness, and beauty." During the various journeys Dwight made between the years 1795 and 1816, he hardly cared that America lacked "ancient castles, ruined abbeys, and fine pictures"—sights European travelers loved to see. Instead, he noted their absence to emphasize a "novelty" in world history. In his travels, Dwight paused to admire nature's sublime beauty.

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Cruise advertisement. (Stillwater Town Historian)





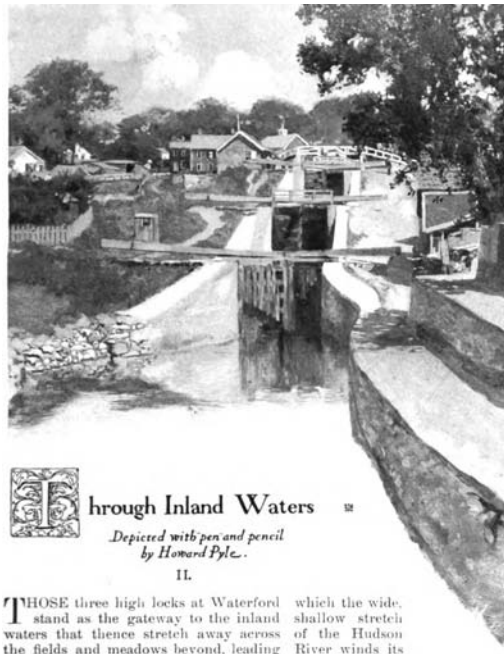
Motorists visiting the Saratoga Surrender Site, early 20th century. (Saratoga Town Historian)

Madison made a similar tour during the early summer of 1791. Early 19th-century tourists who came by carriage from Saratoga Springs or Albany would find local farmers willing to step up to guide their tour.

Veterans of the Revolutionary War had all passed on by the time the railroad began bringing passengers up the valley. A few decades later, the Hudson Valley Railway offered trolley service from Albany to all the Hudson River towns, and out to Greenwich. The railway brochure advertised that the trolley traversed “the battlefields of Saratoga and Lake George and the Route of Burgoyne’s March.” Canal and steamboat as well as railroad and trolley offered the ideal tourist experience: Travelers did not face forward, but toward the side of the moving vehicle. They could comfortably watch the passing scene, which unrolled almost magically, parallel to the direction of travel.

### Illustrating Travels

An 1896 trip up the Champlain Canal by boat provided artistic inspiration for the artist Howard Pyle. He illustrated his own travelogue of a trip from the Raritan Canal in New Jersey, through New York City, up the Hudson, and through the Champlain Canal into Lake Champlain for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, which was published in two parts.



THOSE three high locks at Waterford stand as the gateway to the inland waters that thence stretch away across the fields and meadows beyond, leading far northward, until, by river and lake, the traveller may penetrate into the very heart of Canada, if he chooses to push his journey so far as that. When the heavy, which the wide, shallow stretch of the Hudson River winds its bright and beautiful way. Beyond the stream the valley rises height above height into

Three Combined Locks by Howard Pyle, 1896. published with “Through Inland Waters, Part II,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, January 1897

### COMMEMORATION AND PRESERVATION

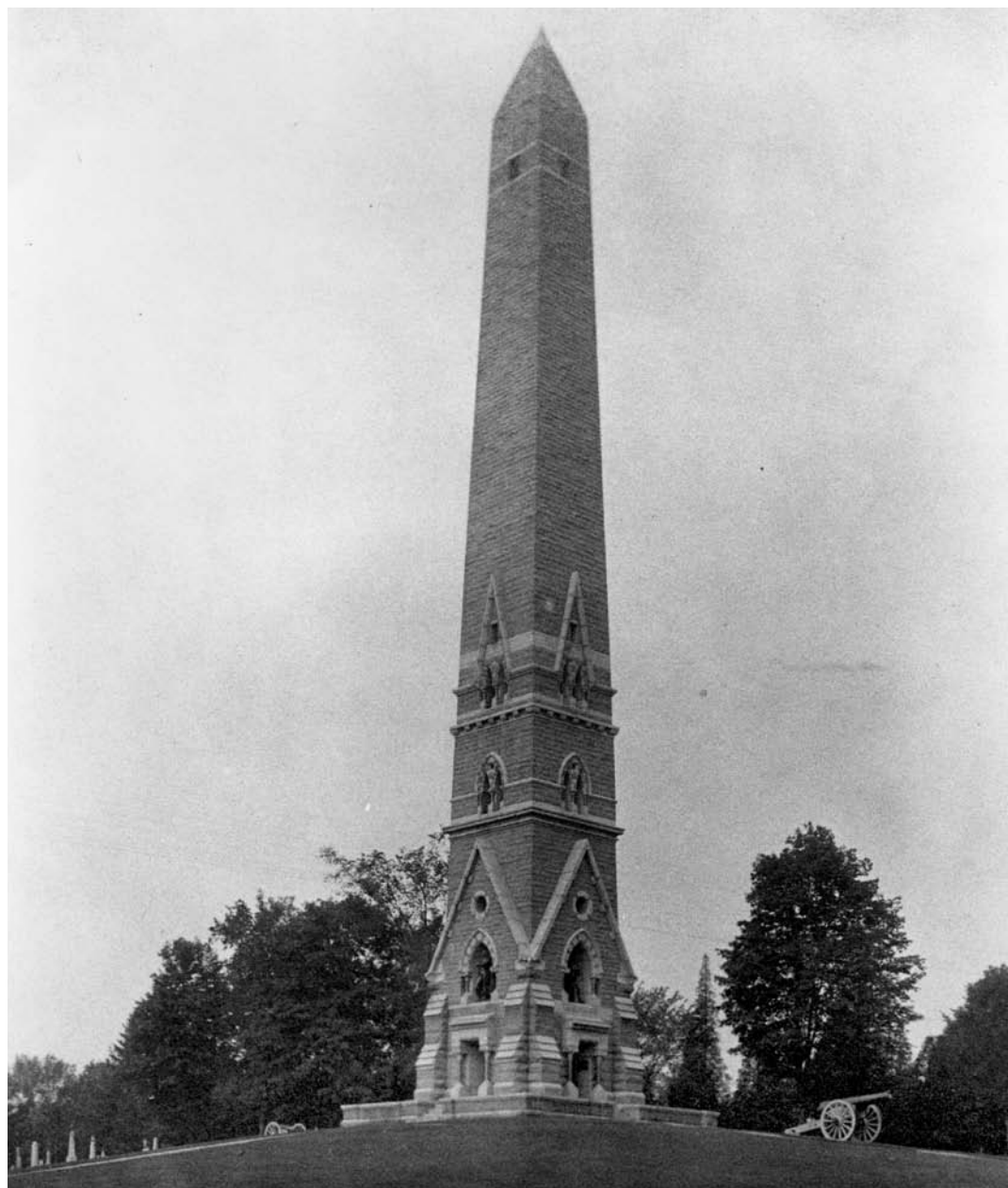
The fourth of July has been celebrated throughout the country since before the War for Independence ended in 1783. Communities of all sizes gathered for picnics, speeches, and fireworks—early versions of which involved blowing a blacksmith’s anvil into the air. But it took until the 1850s, when all the founding fathers and soldiers had passed on, before serious preservation efforts got under way. They began in 1853, with the founding of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, dedicated to saving Washington’s home in Virginia.



Construction of the Saratoga Monument, 1888. (Saratoga Town Historian)

Just two years later, a group of local citizens formed the Saratoga Monument Association to create a monument to the victory they saw as “a niche in the Temple of Liberty.” The Civil War intervened, distracting the entire nation for five long years. After the war, efforts to honor the country’s beginnings became a unifying experience. The 1876 Centennial Exposition celebrated the accomplishments of the young nation. In anticipation of the Centennial, the Saratoga Monument Association reorganized and concentrated on raising private funds, not an easy task during a nationwide recession. They succeeded in raising enough money to build the base of the monument in time to dedicate it on the 100th anniversary of Burgoyne’s capitulation.

The dedication ceremony on October 17, 1877, drew a huge crowd, estimated at 40,000 people. The parade of Masons, military units, and civic leaders measured two miles long. It took five more years to cap the structure at two-thirds the height originally planned and another five to complete the statuary and bronze plaques inside. After running out of money, the Saratoga Monument Association turned the memorial over to New York State. The formal dedication of the Saratoga Monument took place in 1912, for the 135th anniversary, and in 1980 it became part of the Saratoga National Historical Park.

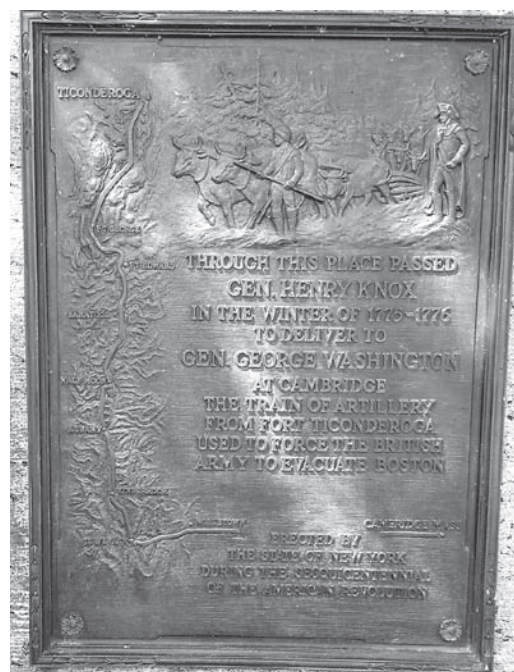


Saratoga Monument. (Saratoga Town Historian)



Preservation of the battlefield itself benefitted a great deal from the dedicated work of Ellen Hardin Walworth, whose grandfather had fought with Colonel Daniel Morgan at Saratoga. She wrote a guide to the battlefield and chaired the Saratoga Monument Association's Committee on Tablets to erect markers in time for the Centennial. A founder of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in 1890, Walworth organized a Saratoga Chapter, which raised funds for granite signposts directing visitors to the Battlefield from Saratoga Springs in 1909. The DAR continue to play a central role in commemoration on the battlefield.

As a dress rehearsal for the 1927 sesquicentennial of the British surrender at Saratoga, the event planners, which included both the Sons and the Daughters of the American Revolution, two rotary clubs, and the newly formed Saratoga Battlefield Association, staged an extravagant four-day celebration. It included an assortment of entertainments popular at the time: parades, pageants, music and dance performances, speeches, and a reenactment in Fort Hardy Park. The 1927 celebration exceeded those of the previous year, engaging more organizations, representatives from surrounding counties and states, and the New York National Guard. The proceedings culminated in the dedication of the Saratoga Battlefield as a New York State battlefield park.

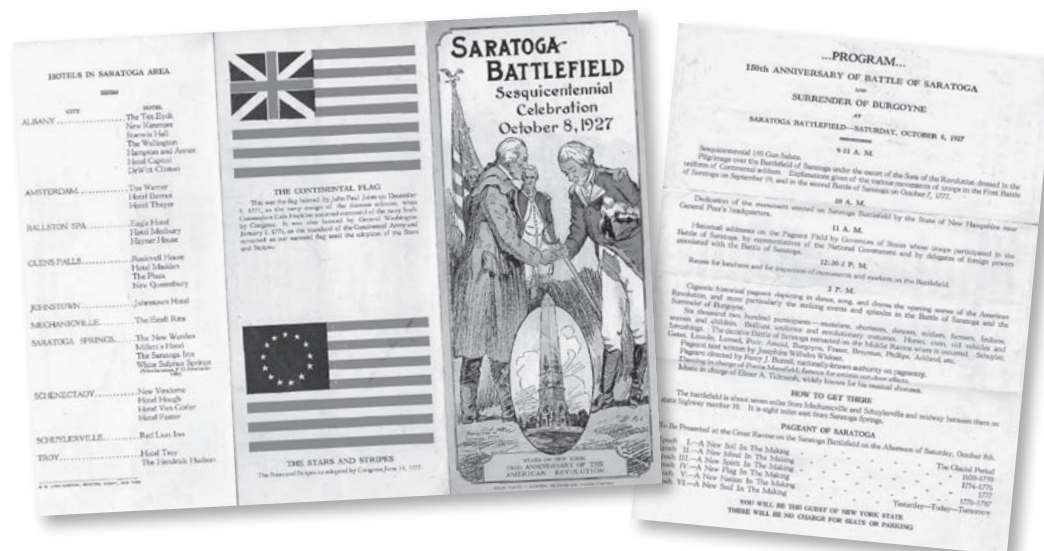


Knox Trail Marker. Photograph by Andrew Alberti

## Commemorating the Revolution

For the sesquicentennial in 1927, 57 granite slabs and boulders with bronze plaques were placed along the route taken by Col. Henry Knox's "Noble Train of Artillery," from Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga to Dorchester Heights, outside of Boston. Additional markers were added later.

Franklin Roosevelt brought his enthusiasm for this historic site to Washington when he became president. He encouraged the expansion of the National Park Service, established in 1916, to include historic areas. A Park Service reorganization begun in 1933, combined with the Historic Sites Act of 1935,



1927 program for the Saratoga Battlefield 150th anniversary celebration. (Saratoga Town Historian)



opened the way for Saratoga Battlefield to become a National Historical Park in 1938.

Saratoga Battlefield has expanded as ongoing historical and archeological research identifies important places or features that require the Park's protection. The Open Space Institute, Agricultural Stewardship Association, and Saratoga PLAN have worked together for many years to protect the view from Bemis Heights by preserving agricultural land and open space across the Hudson in Easton. Interpretive exhibits in the Visitor Center, at the start of the Battlefield Tour Road, have incorporated new scholarship and technology to help visitors envision the multi-layered, complex chronology of the story that unfolded along the Hudson in 1777.

Only a portion of this region's history falls within the scope of the Saratoga National Historical Park. Dozens of places along this waterway, and across the nation, have fueled a passion for historic preservation that gained momentum throughout the 20th century. In 1965, the National Historic Preservation Act launched the National Register of Historic Places and established State Historic Preservation Offices to oversee and support preservation efforts in every state. The fabric of history found along this waterway survives thanks to the efforts of dedicated individuals, organizations, municipalities, and state agencies committed to saving places so they can tell their stories.



Former home of Col. Sidney Berry. (Wikipedia)

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### A Rare Federal Example

Col. Sidney Berry, a Staff Aid to General Washington, settled in Northumberland after the Revolution. The farmhouse he built on the west bank of the Hudson still stands as a rare example of the local Federal building style. New York State's Historic Preservation officer considered it so special that she personally wrote the National Register Nomination for the Sidney Berry House. It was the final residence of Alfred Z. Solomon, whose passion for history made this guidebook possible.

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## ENJOYING NATURE'S PLEASURES

One branch of the Hudson Valley Railway brought holiday-makers to Kaydeross Park on Saratoga Lake. Steam yachts ran moonlight cruises complete with fireworks. The railway also built Ondawa Park in Greenwich, overlooking the dramatic Dionondahowa Falls on the Batten Kill. The park had entertainment for all ages, with a dance hall, croquet courts, a bicycle track, and picnic area. Lighted pathways illuminated summer evening events. The park closed in 1924, but a trail maintained by the Dahowa Power Company along the edge of the gorge has several viewing areas. A small parking area lies just west of Route 29 on Windy Hill Road.

The lakes, river, and woods of the Champlain Canal region have always supported an abundance of fish, fowl, and animals—sustenance for some and sport for others. Local rod and gun clubs got their start during the late 19th century. The area remains popular with duck hunters. Since the 1850s, the Batten Kill has been considered a world-class fly-fishing river. Even on the Hudson, which is still recovering from industrial pollution, catch-and-release fishing yields trophy-sized large- and small-mouth bass.

Vast tracts of formerly private land have been set aside as wildlife areas or transferred



The Drowned Lands of Dresden offer prime habitat for waterfowl and fish. Photograph by Virginia Westbrook



Schuyler Rod and Gun Club logo. (Stillwater Town Historian)

to the New York State Forest Preserve. The largest of these lies on the eastern shore of Lake George in the northwest corner of Fort Ann. The Knapp Estate was owned by the president of Union Carbide. His Shelving Rock mansion no longer stands, but the public can enjoy miles of former carriage roads and bridle paths winding through the mountainous woods east of Lake George. Trails lead to the summits of Sleeping Beauty, Erebus, Black, and Buck Mountains.

Expanses of wetlands, open fields, and woodlands offer breeding habitat for dozens of bird species. The Drowned Lands of the Lake Champlain headwaters harbor waterfowl from

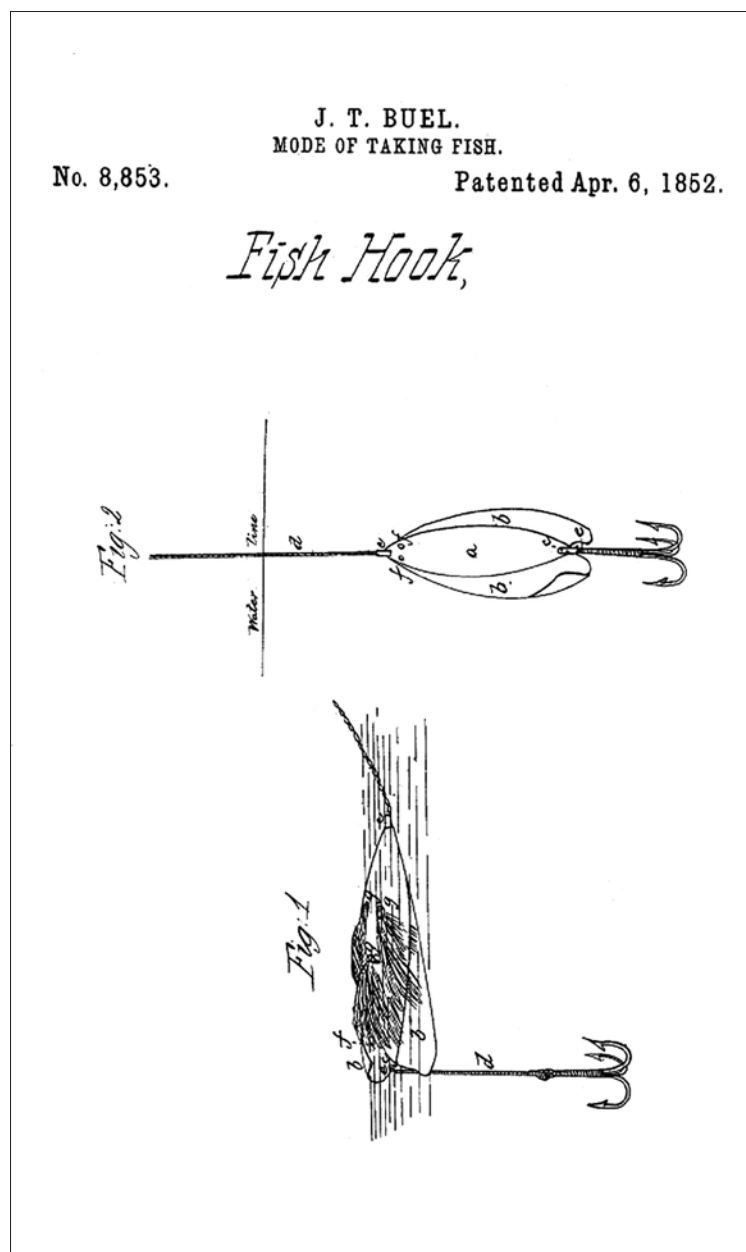
spring to fall. Denton Wildlife Sanctuary, just north of the Northumberland bridge crossing the Hudson, offers a variety of birding trails that pass through hardwoods and swamp habitats covered with wildflowers in the spring. The sanctuary is named for Sherman Foote Denton, a native of Fort Miller, who illustrated wildlife for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's publication, *The Conservationist*, for many years. (See his trout illustration on page 10.)

The Batten Kill Conservancy protects the Livingston Brook Heron Rookery in East Greenwich, not far from Carter's Pond NYS Wildlife Managements Area, which offers a half-mile loop trail with handicapped access for viewing nesting waterfowl and all the bird species that inhabit a wetland. The Lake Champlain Birding Trail provides directions to birding sites all along the byway. It has a kiosk in Whitehall.

Heritage tourism blends with recreation all along the canal route. Hudson Crossing Park,



Winter Raptor Fest in Fort Edward. (Friends of the Washington County Grasslands Important Birding Area)



First American patented lure, by J.T. Buel, 1852. The Skenesborough Museum in Whitehall has an extensive collection of Buel lures. (Skenesborough Museum)

## Fishing Gear

J.T. Buel, who ran a furrier shop in Whitehall, invented the first metal trolling lure by combining a kitchen spoon with a hook. During the 1840s and 1850s, he received patents for his spinners and various types of fly spoons. The Buel Spoon, a burnished and painted tin lure, won a medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.





Stillwater Bicycle Club, circa 1890. (Stillwater Town Historian)

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### Recreation on the Canal

Bicycling became the rage during the late 19th century. Bicycle clubs organized rides along the canal towpath. Boaters “put in” along the canal for a leisurely ride up the canal, into the lake, or out on the river. During the winter months when the canal was closed to navigation and frozen over, ice skaters swarmed across its surface. The Schuylerville turning basin became an ice rink for children of the local mill workers.

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located on the island created by Champlain Canal Lock #5, combines interesting activity areas devoted to environmental education connected by nature trails to the Dix Bridge, Lock 5, and a launch site for paddle boats. The decommissioned Dix Bridge, now rehabilitated for pedestrian and bicycle use, offers views of the Saratoga Dam and the piers of a 900-foot bridge that carried the Hudson Valley Electric Railway across the Hudson from Northumberland to Thompson.

The Town of Waterford overlooks the “sprouts of the Mohawk,” where the Mohawk flows into the Hudson. Waterford’s many parks offer perspective on the engineering schemes that tamed the flowing waters into managed transportation systems. Hiking trails parallel the Waterford Flight of Locks, the highest set of lift locks in the world, raising boats 165 feet through five locks, from the Hudson to the Mohawk River at



Early snowmobile on Saratoga Lake. (Stillwater Town Historian)

the entrance to the Erie Canal (Locks E-2 to Lock E-6). North of Lock E-2 are the old locks of the Waterford side cut, part of the old Champlain Canal. The gates have been removed and the cascade of locks functions as a spillway. Washington County snowmobile clubs have collaborated on a

trail system following the Old Canal bed from Fort Edward to Smith’s Basin and then on the frozen canal from Smith’s Basin to Whitehall. The old canal towpath through Fort Ann is now a multi-use recreational trail, connecting Baldwin Corners Road to the village of Fort Ann.

## Town-by-Town Gazetteer

### Cohoes

An ancient story of an Indian Chief's daughter going over the falls in a canoe may have given this place its name, which means "falling canoe." A Mohawk chief known as the Peacemaker would later survive a plunge down the falls. The miraculous feat helped give rise to an alliance known as the Iroquois Confederacy. (See page 13.)



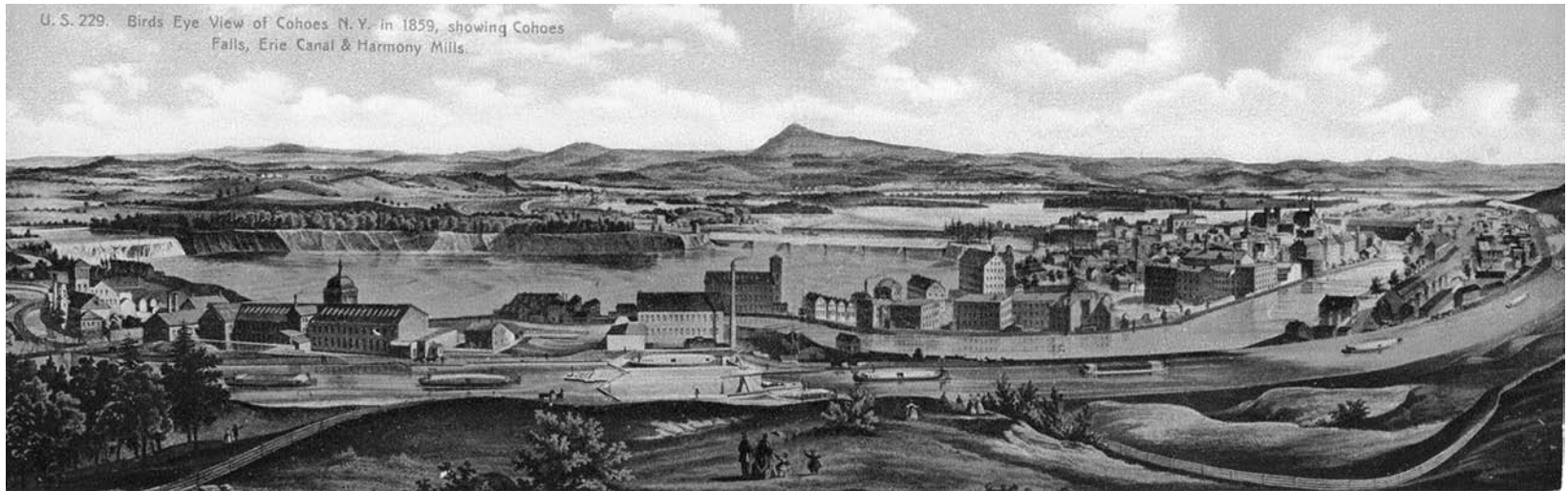
The Mohawk River still supplies an inexhaustible source of waterpower as it flows over Cohoes Falls. Photograph by Virginia Westbrook

In 1630, a Dutch merchant named Kiliaen Van Rensselaer bought this land from the Mohawks. It remained a primarily agrarian community through the Revolutionary War. After the Revolutionary War, with the abundant water power, Cohoes offered a prime spot for manufacturing and commercial operations.

The Cohoes Company, the first major manufacturing company, developed cheap water power and offered incentives to industrialists to locate in the growing city. By 1870, Cohoes was an established manufacturing center, especially of textiles. There were six large cotton mills running 203,000 spindles, 18 knitting mills, two foundries, and three machine shops, among many other industries. The booming textile manufacturing community soon became known as "Spindle City." Harmony Mill No. 3 was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971; part of it now houses luxury residential lofts. It was the largest cotton mill complex in the world when it opened in 1872, and is one of the finest examples of a large-scale textile mill complex outside of New England. The mills are now part of the Harmony Mills Historic District. The Spindle City Historic Society offers a walking tour: [www.spindlecity.net/Guides&Brochures.html](http://www.spindlecity.net/Guides&Brochures.html).

The wealth of Cohoes gave rise to a thriving arts scene, which included the grand Cohoes





Panoramic view of Cohoes showing Cohoes Falls, Erie Canal and Harmony Mills. (Spindle City Historical Society)

Music Hall. Although the city declined as an industrial center during the Great Depression, the historic character of the community has spurred revitalization of Remsen Street and the city's historic district.

The four-acre Falls View Park offers a range of recreational and historical features, including a 192-foot-long pedestrian bridge spanning the School Street power canal, which offers a scenic view of the Cohoes Falls. Interpretive panels can be found in Fall Views Park's canal-side plaza. The roughly two-mile Black Bridge Trail, also known as the Delaware Avenue Trail, begins in Waterford at the Waterford Harbor Visitor Center. It crosses the Mohawk River to Peebles Island State Park, then crosses the Mohawk River again to Van Schaick Island

in Cohoes. It then follows Delaware Avenue to the Black Bridge, a former Delaware & Hudson Railroad Bridge, built in the 1890s, that again spans the Mohawk River over to Green Island.

#### *Nature*

Cohoes Falls: Overlook Park and Falls View Park, [www.friendsofcohoesfalls.org](http://www.friendsofcohoesfalls.org)

#### *History*

Van Schaick Mansion, 1 Van Schaick Avenue, [www.vanschaickmansion.org](http://www.vanschaickmansion.org)  
Harmony Mills Historic District

#### *Culture*

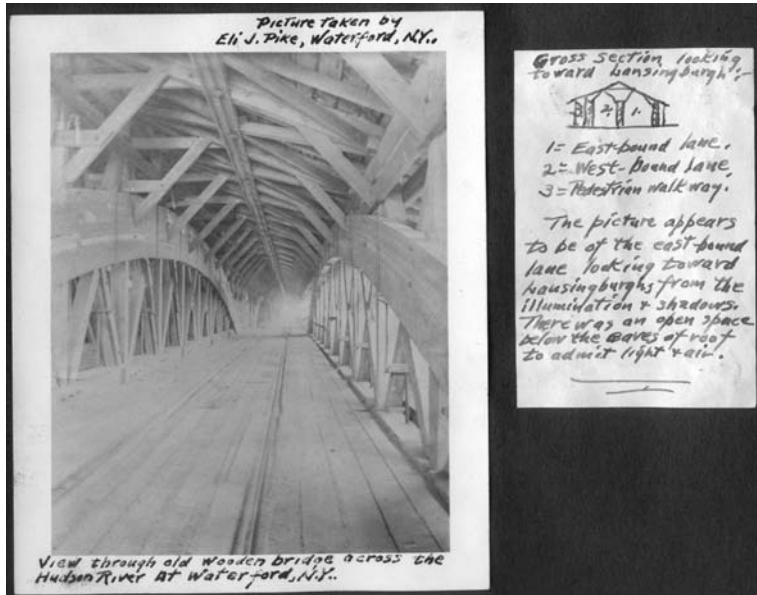
Cohoes Music Hall, 58 Remsen Street, [www.thecohoesmusichall.org](http://www.thecohoesmusichall.org)

#### *Recreation*

Mohawk and Hudson Bikeway  
Black Bridge Trail, [www.traillink.com/trail/black-bridge-trail/](http://www.traillink.com/trail/black-bridge-trail/)

# Waterford

The Mohicans were the first to occupy this land, constructing a palisaded village known as Moenemine's Castle on Peebles Island sometime after the end of the last Ice Age. In 1687, the land was sold to the British and the Half Moon Patent was issued. The first settlement took place on the site of the Village of Waterford, which is considered the oldest incorporated village in America. In 1816, the Town of Waterford split from the Town of Halfmoon.



A scale model of the Union Bridge, with its patent-earning Burr Truss, is on display at the Waterford Museum. (Waterford Historical Society)



King's Canal was the manufacturing center of Waterford. (Waterford Historical Society)

Abundant water resources made Waterford a natural crossroads through which goods moved to markets, people migrated and settled, and where industry flourished. During the 1820s, the King's Power Canal opened, bringing water power to mills. Button Fire Engines, Fuller Nailworks, Mohawk Paper, and other early industries of Waterford started on the King's Canal. Mohawk Paper, specialists in printing and art paper, remains a major local manufacturer.

Today, Waterford stands at the junction of the Erie and Champlain canals and serves as an important welcome center for recreational boaters. Each year, the community celebrates its rich canal history with the Canalfest Weekend, Tugboat Roundup, and the Steamboat Meet held at the Waterford Harbor Visitors Center. Peebles Island State Park, at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, offers spectacular river and rapids views. About 2.5 miles of trail along the old Champlain Canal are part of the Champlain Canalway Trail System.





Built in 1907, the Waterford flight of locks raises watercraft 165 feet, from the Hudson River to the Erie Canal, in just over a mile. (New York State Archives)

### *History*

Waterford Historical Museum and Cultural Center, 2 Museum Lane, <https://waterfordmuseum.com/>

### *Culture*

Waterford Harbor Visitors Center, 1 Tugboat Alley, [www.town.waterford.ny.us/harbor-visitors-center.html](http://www.town.waterford.ny.us/harbor-visitors-center.html)

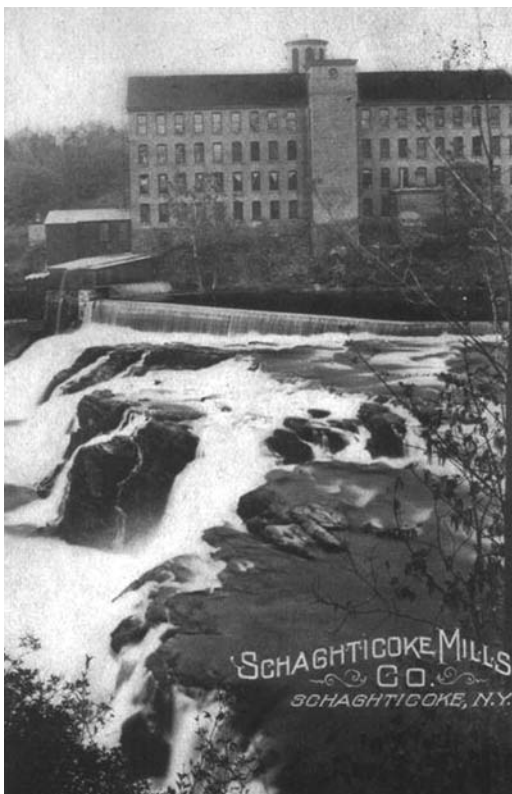
### *Recreation*

Peebles Island State Park, 1 Delaware Avenue North, <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/111>  
Champlain Canalway Trail, <http://champlaincanalwaytrail.org/>  
The Waterford Flight of Locks, <http://www.nycanals.com/Waterford>





Knickerbocker Mansion. (Knickerbocker Museum)



In 1886, four hundred people worked in this woolen mill. (Richard Lohnes Collection)

## Schaghticoke

Driven from their lands by King Philip's War in 1675-1676, Native American refugees from several tribes in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York were resettled in the Mahican territory at Schaghticoke, invited by New York Governor Edmund Andros. He hoped that these Native Americans could buffer the English colonies from French and Native American incursions from the north. In 1676 a treaty was signed with the refugees, commemorated by the planting of an oak tree, later called the Witenagomet Oak. It stood behind the Knickerbocker Mansion until the 1940's, referred to on maps as the "Indian Council tree."

The City of Albany acquired title to a two-mile tract along both sides of the Hoosic River at "Schaahkook" (Schaghticoke) in 1707. About twelve Dutch families from Albany leased farms there from the city beginning in 1709, including Johannes Knickerbocker. His descendant Herman Knickerbocker, born in 1779, was a lawyer, judge, and U.S. Congressman from 1809-1811. He became good friends with author Washington Irving, who visited him in Schaghticoke several times and used him as inspiration for the character of Diedrich Knickerbocker, fictional author of his satirical "History of New York."

Schaghticoke's rich farmland provided the raw material for burgeoning local industries: flax, wool, grains, and wood.

Around 1790, the construction of the first bridge across the Hoosic River at what is now the village of Schaghticoke made it possible for businesspeople to come and harness the tremendous water power of the river's 100-foot falls. New England entrepreneurs moved to Schaghticoke, eager to develop water-powered factories to manufacture woolen and linen fabrics. By the early 19th century, the Hoosic River was powering a wide variety of mills.

Agriculture—primarily dairy and feed crops—is still practiced on the fertile river bottom land and rolling uplands. Industry has moved away, but reminders of the community's industrial past are evident near the Schaghticoke Dam and in Valley Falls, where hydroelectric dams continue to use water power to fuel the community. Toward the end of summer, the community celebrates its agricultural heritage at the annual Schaghticoke Fair, the third-oldest fair in New York State.

### *History*

Knickerbocker Mansion and Cemetery, 132 Knickerbocker Road, [www.knickmansion.com](http://www.knickmansion.com)

### *Recreation*

Lock 4 State Canal Park, 947 Stillwater Bridge Road

Schaghticoke Fairgrounds, 69 Stillwater Bridge Road, [www.schaghticokefair.com](http://www.schaghticokefair.com)

Paddling the Hoosic River, <http://hoorwa.org/recreation/paddling-the-hoosic/>



1889 view of Schaghticoke. (Library of Congress)

# Mechanicville

In the 1760s, Europeans settled the south bank of Tenendehowa Creek, which drains Round Lake into the Hudson River. They erected

grist- and sawmills to serve Dutch farmers in nearby Schaghticoke. Dismissed as landless “mechanics,” they embraced the term. When the Mechanicville post office opened in 1815, they solidified their identity.

Irish immigrants made their way here when they built the Champlain Canal in the 1820s. The arrival of the railroad in 1835

integrated the burgeoning settlement into the wider economy. The American Linen Thread Company, textile mills, sash and blind manufacturers, brick makers—even one of the earliest manufacturers of friction matches in America—all found ample power, workforce, and shipping opportunities in Mechanicville. When completed in 1913, the freight train transfer yard in Mechanicville was the third largest in the United States. Irish, Italian, Lithuanian, and many other immigrants found work in the local mills and railyard.

In 1915, the City of Mechanicville was incorporated. The 0.8 square mile city holds the distinction of being the smallest city by area

in the state. The community celebrates its rich railroad tradition with the recently renovated Boston and Maine Railyard XO Tower, which now serves as the home of the local chamber of commerce and a visitor center.

## *History*

Boston & Maine Railroad XO Tower,  
10 Elizabeth Street

Halfmoon Historical Society Museum,  
Town Hall Plaza, [www.townofhalfmoon-ny.gov/historical-society](http://www.townofhalfmoon-ny.gov/historical-society)

## *Culture*

Arts Center on the Hudson, 2 South Main  
Street, [www.artscenteronthehudson.com](http://www.artscenteronthehudson.com)

## *Recreation*

Mechanicville City Dock, Terminal Street

Kayaking on Tenendehowa Creek, access near  
Coon’s Crossing Road

Zim Smith Trail connects Ballston Spa to  
Coon’s Crossing in Halfmoon

Light House Park, 589 Hudson River Road,  
<http://www.townofhalfmoon-ny.gov/parks-department/pages/lighthouse-park>



Postcard of Mechanicville, showing post office and lift bridge. (Image courtesy of the Metropolitan New York Library Council, Digital Culture of Metropolitan New York: Queens College, Waterways of New York and the New York Heritage Digital Collections: Waterways of New York database, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies--Queens College (CUNY))



Towermen controlled the shunting of rail cars mechanically from the control tower. (Mechanicville City Historian)





The buildings of the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company were demolished in 2013. (Town of Stillwater Historian)

# Stillwater

Stillwater sits near the confluence of the Hudson and Hoosic rivers and was a strategically significant crossroad along ancient trails that connected the Hudson River Valley with the Connecticut River and Champlain Valley. In 1709, Colonel Pieter Schuyler built a blockhouse and a stockade called Fort Ingoldsby. It was a supply post to support an expedition against French Canada during Queen Anne's War. On October 7, 1777, the town furnished the field for the Battles of Bemis Heights, where the decisive American



Brown's Beach on Saratoga Lake. Photograph by Linda Palmeri

victory at Saratoga renewed patriots' hopes for independence and secured essential foreign recognition and support.

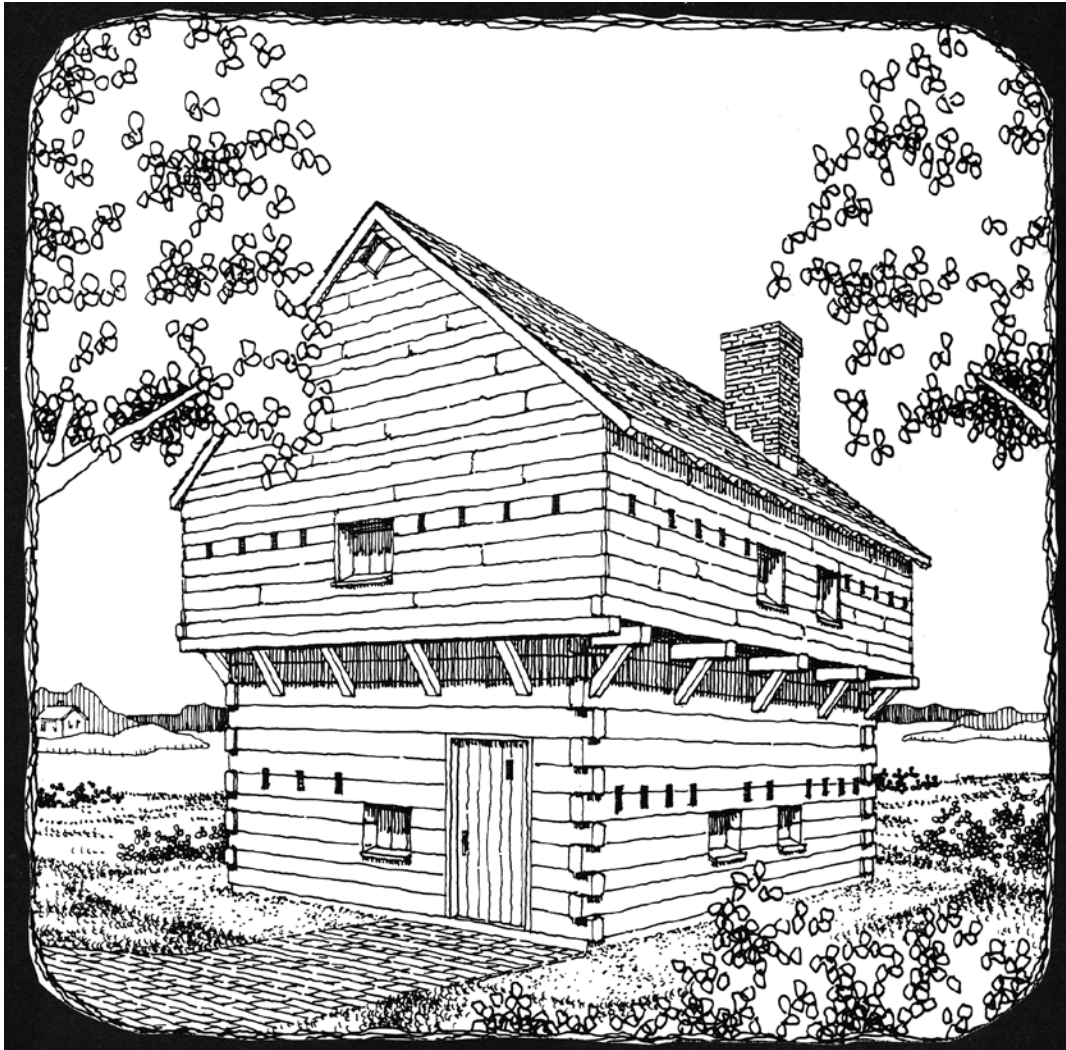
Following the completion of the Champlain Canal in 1823, Stillwater flourished and became home to pulp and paper mills, board mills, textile, knitting, and hosiery mills. The Newland brothers, Rial and Henry, founded Saratoga Knitting Mills to produce underwear, socks, and stockings. The mill opened in the 1870s and continued operation into the late 20th century. The Newland brothers' brick mansions, mirror images of one another, stand side-by-side along Route 4 opposite the Blockhouse.

Modeled after a French and Indian War blockhouse, the Stillwater Blockhouse was built in 1927 as a visitor's center for the Saratoga National Historical Park. Timbers believed to be from the 1777 fortifications of the Saratoga Battlefield are incorporated into the building. The blockhouse was removed



United Shuco in Stillwater. (Town of Stillwater Historian)





The Stillwater Blockhouse was modeled after a French-and-Indian-War-era blockhouse. (Town of Stillwater Historian)

from the park in 1975. In 1999, it was relocated to its present site, where it serves as an information center.

Today, Stillwater is home to historic homes, churches, and cemeteries, the Champlain Canalway Trails, Saratoga National Historical Park, and the Stillwater Blockhouse Museum and Visitor's Center. From the Hudson River to Saratoga Lake, Stillwater offers a diverse landscape filled with history and recreational opportunities.

#### *Nature*

Nature Trails at Champlain Canal Lock 4 State Park

#### *History*

Stillwater Blockhouse Museum, 692 Hudson Avenue, <http://stillwaterny.org/departments/parks-recreational/blockhouse-museum-park>

Saratoga National Historical Park, 648 Route 32 Stillwater, [www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm)

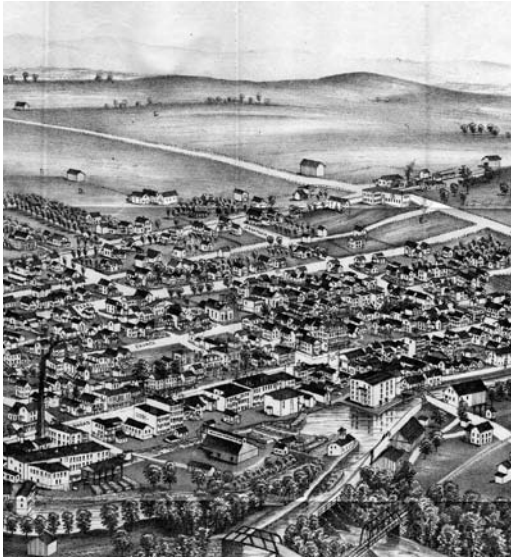
#### *Recreation*

Brown's Beach on Saratoga Lake, 511 NY-9P, <http://brownsbeachresort.com/about/>

Hudson River Park, Route 4



# Schuylerville



Bird's-eye view map of Schuylerville published by Lucien R. Burleigh in 1889. (Library of Congress)

Led by Pieter Schuyler and Robert Livingston, a group of wealthy investors purchased the Saratoga Patent in 1684, constructing their settlement along Fish Creek. Here, river-bottomland grew good crops, the creeks provided enough water to power mills, and the river provided transportation to move goods to market. A series of forts were constructed here during a repeated cycle of construction and warfare. That cycle ended after British General John Burgoyne was forced to capitulate following his defeat at the Battles of Saratoga.

Philip Schuyler (1733-1804) rebuilt his family's farm at Saratoga after the battles. Motivated by his desire to expand his own economic interest, Schuyler advocated for a canal connecting the Hudson and Lake Champlain, which crossed through the heart of his estate. By 1820, Saratoga was renamed Schuylerville to honor the family and the man who put it on the map. Immigrants flooded into Schuylerville throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, coming by canal or rail to find work in the mills that developed along Fish Creek.

Today, Schuylerville is enjoying a renaissance, marked by the Hudson Crossing Park at Lock 5, the Champlain Canal Region Gateway Visitors Center, the Champlain Canalway Trail, and the revitalization of Main

Street. In addition, the geologic formation of Stark's Knob offers hiking trails with a great view at the top.

## *Nature*

Stark's Knob, Stark's Knob Road, <https://www.hudsoncrossingpark.org/virtualtour/StarksKnob.html>

Hudson Crossing Bi-county Educational Park at Lock 5, [www.hudsoncrossingpark.org](http://www.hudsoncrossingpark.org)

## *History*

Fort Hardy Park , <http://villageofschuylerville.org/Areas-of-Interest/Parks-and-Recreation.asp>

General Philip Schuyler House, part of Saratoga National Historical Park, [www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm)

Knox Trail Pocket Park, [www.hudsoncrossingpark.org/virtualtour/KnoxTrailPark.html](http://www.hudsoncrossingpark.org/virtualtour/KnoxTrailPark.html)

Saratoga Siege Trail, 1060-1066 US-4, [www.saratogaplan.org/explore/public-preserves-trails/the-saratoga-siege-trail/](http://www.saratogaplan.org/explore/public-preserves-trails/the-saratoga-siege-trail/)

Victory Woods, part of Saratoga National Historical Park, [www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm)

Saratoga Surrender Site, <http://friendsofsaratogabattlefield.org/saratoga-surrender-site/>

## *Culture*

Saratoga Monument: part of Saratoga

National Historical Park:

[www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm)

Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National  
Cemetery, [www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/  
geraldbhsolomonsaratoga.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/geraldbhsolomonsaratoga.asp)

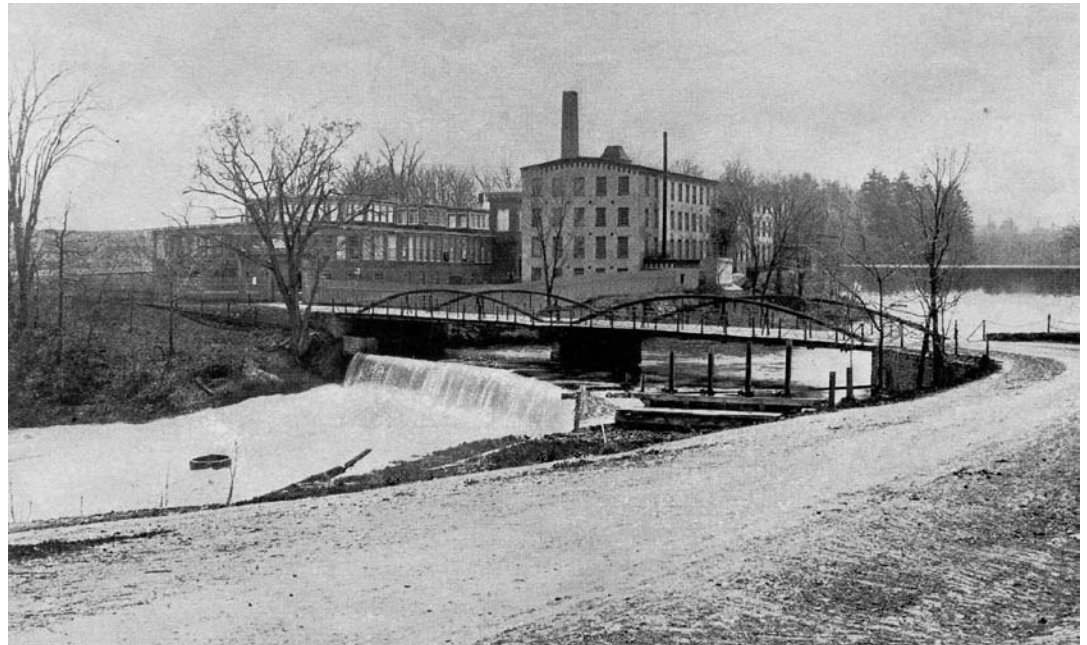
## *Recreation*

Champlain Canal Lock 5 Park, 121 Route 4N,  
[www.nyscanals.gov](http://www.nyscanals.gov)

Town boat launch on Route 4

Village boat launch, Schuylerville

Floating docks at Hudson Crossing Park



Mills of the Saratoga Victory Manufacturing Company.  
(Town of Saratoga Historian)



General Philip Schuyler's house, built soon after  
Burgoyne ordered the farm to be burned, remains  
largely as it was in 1777. (National Park Service)

## Greenwich

Nestled between the Hudson River and the Batten Kill, a nationally recognized trout stream, Greenwich is a beautifully intact 19th-century village. During the third week in June, the village celebrates its founder, Job Whipple, with the Whipple City Festival, a three-day festival with crafts, a carnival, and other community activities.



Dairy judging at the Washington County Fair.  
(Washington County Fair)

The Town of Greenwich became independent of the Town of Argyle in 1803. Just a year later, Job Whipple, a Quaker from Rhode Island, established the first cotton mill in New York State on the shores of the Batten Kill—the first of many that spurred

the growth of a settlement called Whipple City. Incorporated as Union Village in 1809, the village's Quaker roots gave rise to abolitionist sentiments. Several homes on State Street became important stops along the Underground Railroad. In Mowry Park, near the center of the village, a plaque displays a map of homes and points of interest where fugitive slaves were said to have found safe haven until they could be secreted to Canada. Greenwich brought the well-known abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Horace Greeley to lecture in the village in the 1860s.

Greenwich's industrial legacy developed from its role as a mill town and trading center on the Batten Kill River. The site of Hiram Clark's mill at Dionondahowa Falls was established in 1830. The Dunbarton flax-spinning mill, established in 1879, operated for 72 years. The mill produced linen thread known for its strength.

### *Nature*

Carter's Pond Wildlife Management Area,  
[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24402.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24402.html)

Denton Nature Preserve, Route 4, near Fort Miller, [www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newyork/places-preserves/denton-sanctuary.xml](http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newyork/places-preserves/denton-sanctuary.xml)

Livingston Brook Heron Rookery, <http://battenkillconservancy.org/livingston-brook-heron-rookery.html>





Tubing on the Batten Kill River. Photograph by Sébastien Barré

Dionondahowa Falls Trail and Overlook,  
Windy Hill Road (Easton)

### *History*

Underground Railroad Interpretive Kiosk at  
Mowry Park, 147 Main Street

Childhood Home of Susan B. Anthony,  
2835 State Route 29 (not open to the public)

### *Culture*

Washington County Fairgrounds, 392 Old  
Schuylerville Road,  
[www.washingtoncountyfair.com](http://www.washingtoncountyfair.com)

Farm Museum at the Washington County  
Fairgrounds, 392 Old Schuylerville Road, [www.washingtoncountyfair.com/farm-museum.html](http://www.washingtoncountyfair.com/farm-museum.html)

I.V.H. Gill Room (Local History Archive at  
Greenwich Public Library) 148 Main Street,  
[www.greenwichfreelibrary.com/services/gill-room/](http://www.greenwichfreelibrary.com/services/gill-room/)

Rough and Ready Firehouse Museum  
(late 19th- and early 20th-century fire-fighting  
equipment and memorabilia), Main Street

### *Recreation*

Greenwich Town Beach on the Batten Kill,  
NYS Route 29

Fly-fishing on the Batten Kill, [www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish\\_marine\\_pdf/pfrbattenkil.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/pfrbattenkil.pdf)

Kayaking on the Batten Kill, County Route 113  
(Clark's Mills) and Route 29 (Middle Falls)

Skiing, Willard Mountain, 77 The Intervale  
Road, [www.willardmountain.com](http://www.willardmountain.com)

Thunder Mountain Recreation Area Recreation  
Trails, Fishing, and Picnic Area, North Road,  
[www.greenwichchamber.org/m2files/Thunder-Mountain-Brochure.pdf](http://www.greenwichchamber.org/m2files/Thunder-Mountain-Brochure.pdf)



Fort Edward was home to several stoneware pottery companies that produced items like this crock. (Fort Edward Historical Association)

## Fort Edward

Known to the Native Americans as the “Great Carrying Place,” Fort Edward has played a central role in all the conflicts between the British and French in North America. Little Wood Creek, on the banks of the Hudson River near the Old Fort House, was the site of major Native American occupations, one era dating to 1000 B.C., and another from 1000 to 1300 A.D. Archaeological investigations at the Little Wood Creek site and nearby have unearthed extensive material evidence of a Native population that inhabited this area over a 2,000- to 6,000-year period.

Fort Edward is named for the British fortifications constructed in the late 1750s to guard the portage between the Upper Hudson River and Lake Champlain during the French and Indian War. During that time, Fort Edward’s temporary military population neared that of major Colonial cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. The Old Fort House, now housing the Old Fort House Museum, was built around 1772, in part from timbers salvaged from Fort Edward, and served as the temporary headquarters of British General John Burgoyne and Americans Benedict Arnold and John Stark.

Fort Edward industry took advantage of the natural falls of the waterway for processing manufactured goods and shipping

traffic opened by the construction of the Champlain Canal. By 1854, the blast furnace in Fort Edward was producing pig iron from ore mined near Fort Ann and brought to the furnace through the canal. Water access is still a key feature of this community, with several historical museums within walking distance of the Fort Edward Yacht Basin.

Rogers Island is known as the birthplace of the Army Rangers. The island is named for Major Robert Rogers, who led his company of Rangers in guerrilla-style attacks and raids against the French and Indians during the Seven Years War. While encamped at Fort Edward in 1757, Rogers wrote “Ranging Rules,” outlining his training methods and tactics. These rules were rewritten in the modern era as “Standing Orders” and are still used by the US Army Rangers.

### *Nature*

Fort Edward Important Bird Area, 390 Black House Road, [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/97661.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/97661.html), [www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/fort-edward-grasslands](http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/fort-edward-grasslands)

### *History*

Old Fort House Museum, Research Center and Shop, 29 Broadway, [www.oldforthousemuseum.com](http://www.oldforthousemuseum.com)

Rogers Island Visitor Center, 11 Rogers Island, [www.rogersisland.org](http://www.rogersisland.org)



Lively entertainment at Little Theater on the Farm. (Little Theater on the Farm)

### *Culture*

Little Theater on the Farm, 27 Plum Road,  
[www.littletheater27.org](http://www.littletheater27.org)

Burial Place of Jane McCrea, Union  
 Cemetery, 8 Schuyler Street

Washington County Historical Society, 167  
 Broadway, [www.wchs-ny.org](http://www.wchs-ny.org)

Fort Edward Art Center (open by appointment,  
 call 518-747-3090), 83 Broadway

### *Recreation*

Fort Edward Yacht Basin, 159 Broadway,  
<http://villageoffortedward.com/Attractions/YachtBasin/>

Glens Falls Feeder Canal Parks & Trail  
 (access near the Fort Edward Train Station)  
<http://feedercanal.org/canoekayak/locations/>

Fishing and boating at Cossayuna Lake,  
 East Shore Road, Argyle, [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/89476.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/89476.html)



Fort Edward canal terminal. (Fort Edward Historical Association)





Annual canoe and kayak race on the Glens Falls Feeder Canal. Photograph by Mike Klein



Hudson Falls historic district. Photograph by Doug Kerr via Wikimedia Commons

## Hudson Falls

A granite and bronze marker in front of the Hudson Falls Public Library grounds, at the corner of Main and Clark Streets, is one of 56 markers commissioned in 1926, the sesquicentennial of the American Revolution. The markers highlight the route of the Knox Cannon Trail through New York and Massachusetts. You can find other markers along the Lakes to Locks Passage between Crown Point and Albany.

Hudson Falls is located along a river bend as the Hudson flows easterly and then turns sharply south. Albert Baker settled near the falls of the Hudson in 1768, just below the present village center. The cascading falls are the highest on the Hudson River, dropping about 80 feet over the course of a mile.

Baker established a small wing dam (a small dam that extends only partway across the river) and sawmill, the first water-powered mill at the falls. The growing community came to be known as Baker's Falls until the name was changed to Sandy Hill in 1810. After a century as Sandy Hill, the village was renamed Hudson Falls in 1910. Each September the village holds a carnival-type celebration to remember the old village name, Sandy Hill. The event is referred to as "Sandy Hill Days" and is hosted in Paris and Juckett parks.

During the 19th century, foundries, sawmills, and paper mills were mainstays of the local economy. Kingsbury Bluestone was quarried in the Town of Kingsbury, of which Hudson Falls is a part. This durable dolomite rock had many architectural and structural applications, including canal walls, bridges, and aqueducts. Portions of the Brooklyn Bridge towers are built of Kingsbury Bluestone.

The Glens Falls Feeder Canal runs through Hudson Falls and was an important conduit for sending local goods to markets far and wide, and for receiving shipments of coal from Pennsylvania and rags and wood pulp for use in local paper mills. Today, the Feeder Canal is a multi-use recreational trail for hiking, biking, and canoeing.

### *History*

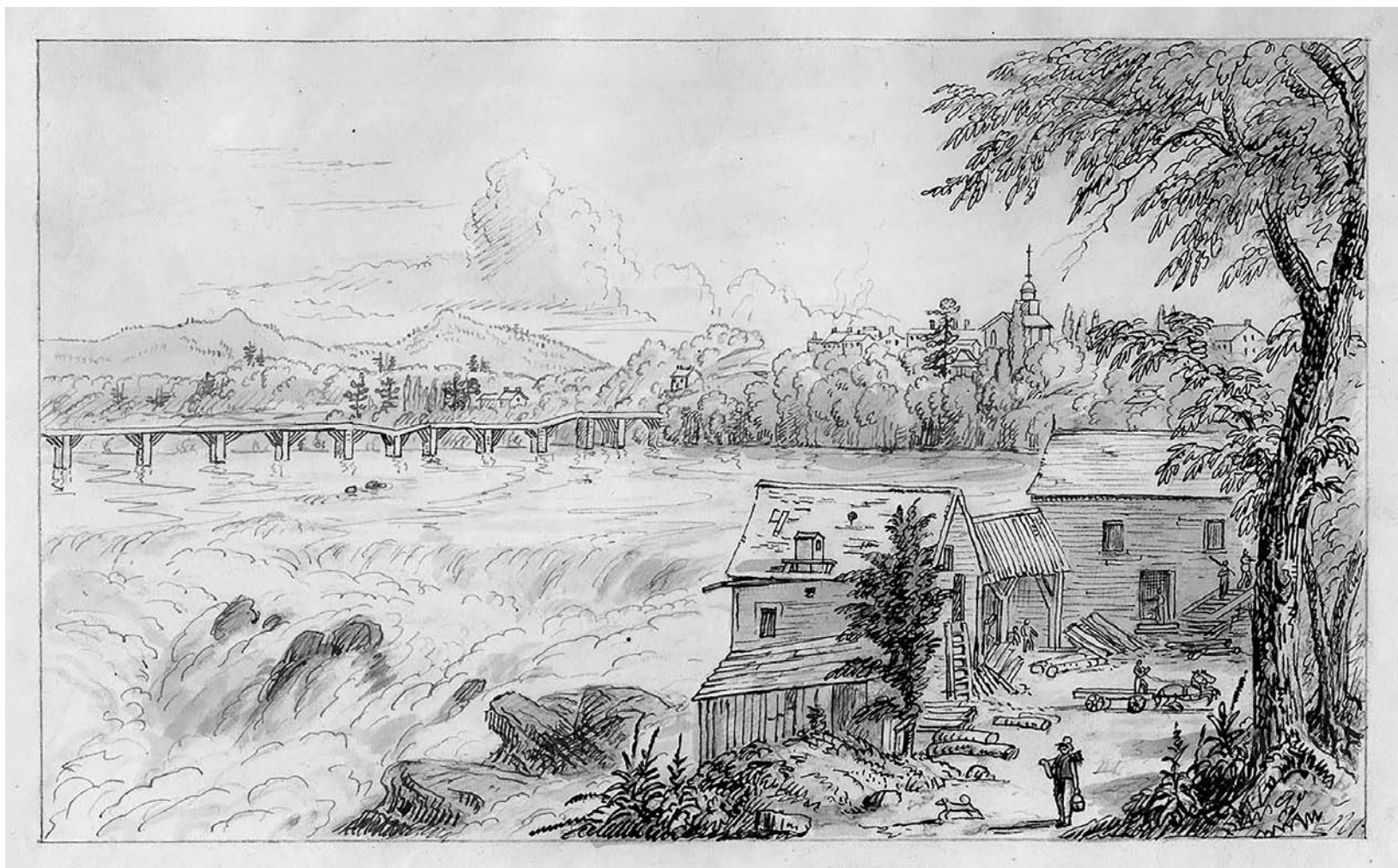
Five Combines, Glens Falls Feeder Canal, [www.feeder canal.org](http://www.feeder canal.org)

Historic Coal Mines, Maple Street (Hudson Falls), [www.feeder canal.org](http://www.feeder canal.org)

Hartford Museum & Civil War Enlistment Center, 25 Main Street (Hartford)

### *Recreation*

Glens Falls Feeder Canal



*Sandy Hill NR (North River)* by Thomas Cole, 1835. (Courtesy of Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Edith (Mrs. Howard) Silberstein, 1965.68.3)



# Fort Ann

The Village of Fort Ann sits at Halfway Brook, midway along an Indian path made to travel between the Hudson River and Lake Champlain. European armies tramped along this route between 1690 and 1760, building

fortifications near here for each of the four French and Indian Wars. The fort built during Queen Anne's War (1702-1713) gave this place its name. In 1777, American Rebels fought in the Battle of Fort Anne and then retreated ahead of Burgoyne's invasion army, felling trees to block the road to the south. Their sabotage delayed the British advance long enough for

Colonial forces to mount a successful defense at Saratoga and turn the tide of war in America's favor.

When war gave way to settlement, the nearly level terrain presented the most promising route for a canal connecting Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. When the Champlain Canal opened in 1823, it made Fort Ann an inland port. The canal also served as a route for fugitive slaves in the decades before the Civil War. The Wray Farm, the Old Stone House Library, and a



The Battle Hill plaque commemorating the Battle of Fort Anne sits in a rock face along Route 4. (Town of Fort Ann)

cave at Kane's Falls are all sites associated with the Underground Railroad.

The Town of Fort Ann stretches west to the eastern shore of Lake George, embracing ancient mountains whose deposits of iron ore fueled local industry. Today, hiking and horse trails wind through the woods to dramatic mountaintop vistas. Paddlers and boaters can fish or explore abundant wildlife on Lake George, Halfway Brook, the Champlain Canal, and scattered smaller lakes and ponds.

In winter, the Champlain Canal, from Smith's Basin to Whitehall and the drained canal bed from Smith's Basin to Fort Edward, provides excellent recreational opportunities for snowmobilers. The old canal towpath through Fort Ann is now a multi-use recreational trail, connecting Baldwin Corners Road to the Village of Fort Ann. In the winter, it is maintained as a snowmobile trail through a permit with the Canal Corporation.



The Old Stone House Library in Fort Ann. (Library of Congress)





Members of Washington County snowmobile clubs volunteered to help develop trail systems connecting to the canal. (Courtesy Washington County Association of Snowmobile Clubs)

### *History*

Fort Ann Pocket Park at Battle Hill

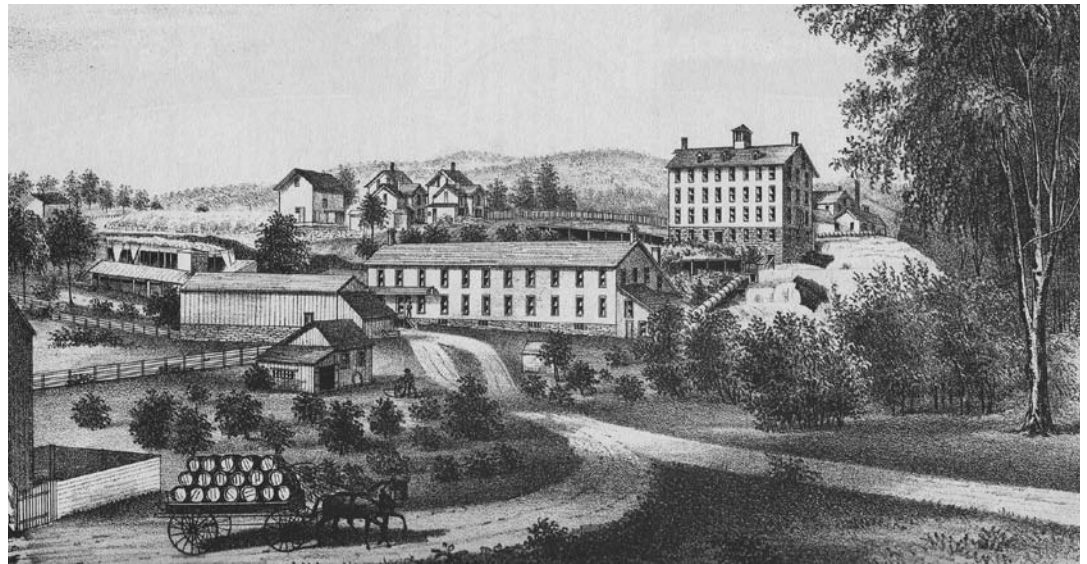
### *Culture*

Old Stone House Library

### *Recreation*

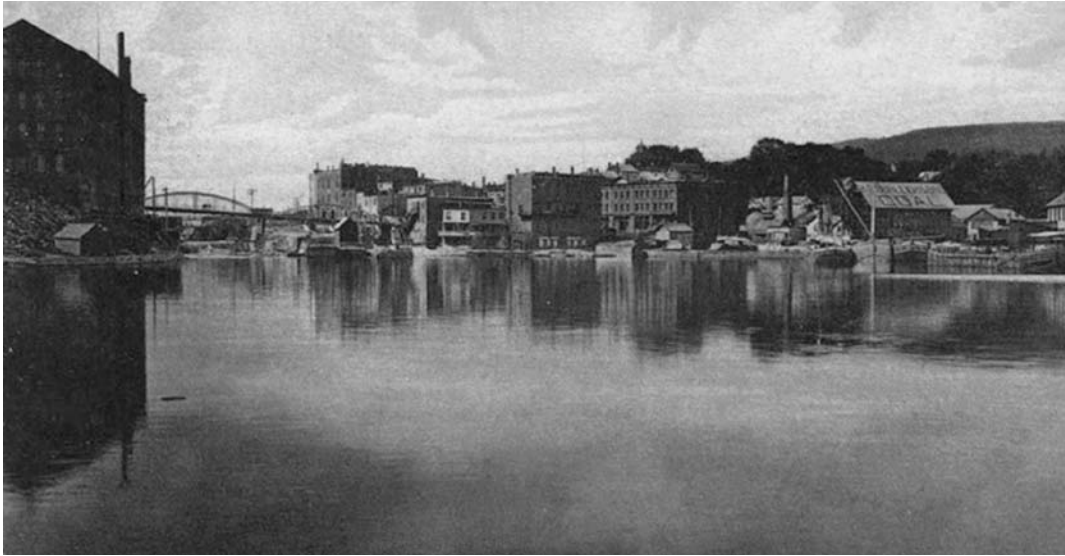
Lake George Wild Forest, which includes Shelving Rock Falls in Fort Ann

Floating Dock at Fort Ann Canal Park



Quartz mined in the area was used for wood varnish and stain at the Bridgeport Wood Finishing Company, 1870s. (Fort Ann Historical Committee)

# Whitehall



Like most canal communities, Whitehall's downtown buildings faced their watery thoroughfare. (Griswold Library)

Whitehall, where Lake Champlain meets the Champlain Canal, commands a historically significant shipping and transportation corridor as well as a place in American history. Loyalist Philip Skene established Skenesborough, a vast 56,000-acre empire at the head of Lake Champlain, in 1759. Skene was in England when the Revolutionary War broke out and Benedict Arnold commandeered his sawmills, harbor, and shipyards to build an American military fleet, which he used to deter a British attack on Lake Champlain at the Battle of Valcour in 1776. The construction of the American fleet has earned Whitehall the title “the Birthplace of the United States Navy.”

During the War of 1812, the shipyards of Whitehall again supplied ships for the American fleet. After the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1814, the government decommissioned *U.S.S. Ticonderoga* and used it for commercial purposes before the ship sunk in Whitehall Harbor. The excavated ship is now on display outside the Skenesborough Museum.

When the Champlain Canal opened in 1823, boats from Pennsylvania and New York City came up the canal and passed boats coming down the lake from Montreal and Burlington. The late 19th and early 20th centuries brought silk mills to Whitehall, which shipped finished silk ribbon and cloth to urban markets by canal boat, lake sloop, or rail.

Skene Manor, originally called Mountain Terrace, was built in 1874-75 for New York State Supreme Court Judge Joseph H. Potter. In 1946, it was renamed Skene Manor in honor of Whitehall's founding father, Philip Skene. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it is owned and operated by Whitehall Skene Manor Preservation, Inc., a local nonprofit dedicated to preserving and restoring the structure.

## *Nature*

East Bay Wildlife Management Area (hiking, hunting/trapping, fishing, and nature viewing), [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24404.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24404.html)

## *History*

Skenesborough Museum and Heritage Area  
Visitor Center, [www.skenesborough.com/skenesborough-museum](http://www.skenesborough.com/skenesborough-museum)

## *Culture*

Whitehall Historical Society at the Griswold  
Public Library, [www.whitehallhistory.org](http://www.whitehallhistory.org)

Skene Manor, 8 Potter Terrace,  
[www.skenemanor.org](http://www.skenemanor.org)

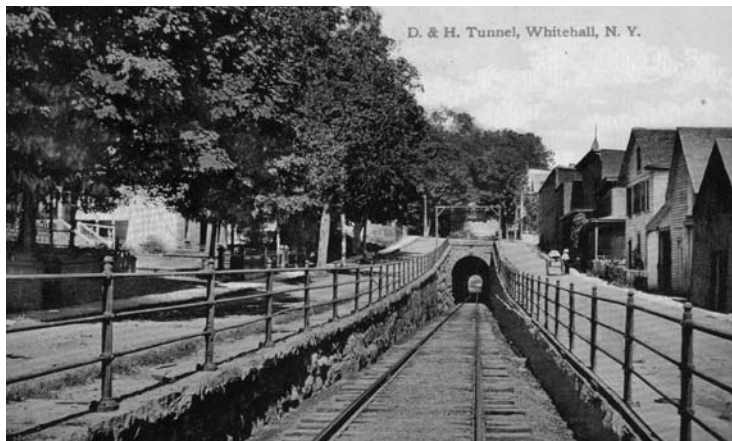
William Miller Home and Farm, 1614  
County Route 11, 518-282-9617  
[www.adventistheritage.org/article/23/historic-sites/miller-farm](http://www.adventistheritage.org/article/23/historic-sites/miller-farm)

## *Recreation*

Harbor Place Canal Park and Boat Launch,  
Skenesborough Drive



Whitehall silk mill along the canal. (NYS Canal Society)



Before a track realignment in 1934, a single-track tunnel created a bottleneck on the Delaware and Hudson main line through downtown Whitehall. (Griswold Library)



The grey sandstone of the Victorian Gothic Skene Manor was quarried by Italian stonecutters from the mountain on which it was constructed. (Whitehall Skene Manor Preservation, Inc.)



## The Drowned Lands: Putnam & Dresden



Public fishing dock at South Bay of Lake Champlain.  
(NYS DEC)

Averaging only five miles wide, the towns of Putnam and Dresden are bound on the west by Lake George and on the east by Lake Champlain, forming the northern tip of Washington County. The Lakes to Locks Passage Scenic Byway, Route 22, bisects the towns from north to south, offering dramatic views of wooded mountainsides and rocky outcrops, evidence of complex geological forces that are still at work today. Roadcuts through the mountains provide an interesting glimpse at underlying sandstone, limestone, shale, gneiss, and mineral deposits.

Along the narrow neck of Lake Champlain, the Putnam and Dresden shores are lined with marshes. The Natives knew this watery landscape of marsh plants and semi-submerged trees as *Onderiguegon*, which translates to a “conflux of waters.” Europeans refer to it as the “Drowned Lands.” Various species of birds nest among the trees, making this an important stop on the Lake Champlain Birding Trail.

This rugged area was near the frontlines of several battles for the control of the waterway during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Here General John Burgoyne pursued retreating American troops prior to the Battles of Saratoga.



The Gull Bay Preserve is a popular destination for those wishing to see a great blue heron rookery during its active season. (Lake George Land Conservancy)

Today, the rugged landscape attracts hikers, bikers, ATVers, and snowmobilers. Climbing these mountaintops rewards you with beautiful 360-degree views of Lake George and Lake Champlain. Hulett's Landing is the only free public beach on Lake George in Washington County.

The Lake George Land Conservancy's purchase of the Gull Bay Preserve, located in Putnam, marked a significant conservation success. This 434-acre woodland hillside property contains old logging roads and two wetland swamps, one of the most important wetlands in the Lake George watershed.

#### *Nature*

Great Unconformity, Route 22 near Putnam Center

Lake Champlain Birding Trail,  
<https://files.lakestolocks.org/portal/ltlDJT8431FV95342790/pdf/content/ltlA6045214F91B355DB.pdf>

Chubbs Dock Wildlife Management Area,  
[www.ibafriends.org/node/124](http://www.ibafriends.org/node/124)

#### *Recreation*

Washington County Park at Hulett's Landing

Lake George, Sunset Bay Road, Dresden

Public Fishing Dock and Boat Launch, South Bay (Lake Champlain), near the South Bay Bridge, [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/53108.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/53108.html)



Expansive marshes make the Drowned Lands an important stop for birds. Photograph by Virginia Westbrook

Lake George Wild Forest: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/53165.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/53165.html)

Gull Bay Public Beach and Boat Launch,  
Gull Bay Road, Putnam

Gull Bay Preserve: [www.lglc.org/preserves/gull-bay/](http://www.lglc.org/preserves/gull-bay/)

# The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor: A New Kind of National Park

In 2000, the Erie Canal was designated as a National Heritage Corridor, spanning 524 miles across upstate New York. The Canalway includes four canals and their historic alignments: Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain canals. From Buffalo to Albany, and north to Whitehall, it includes 234 cities, towns, and villages along the canal system.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with the National

Park Service, the NYS Canal Corporation, and numerous other local, state, and federal partners, works to preserve and promote the legendary waterway that shaped our nation.

The rich history, culture, heritage, and natural resources combine to make the Canalway a world-class destination for travelers. Throughout the year, residents and visitors enjoy hundreds of canal-related festivals and events. Boating the canal will bring you up close to engineering marvels

and canal structures; urban kayaking allows you to experience the cities from a new perspective. Nature preserves, wildlife management areas, state parks, national landmarks, and forests provide numerous opportunities to explore the outdoors. And there is even a photo contest so you can share your unique perspective of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Learn more at [www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org).

## THE CHAMPLAIN CANALWAY TRAIL

The Champlain Canalway Trail follows the 62-mile Champlain Canal from Waterford to Whitehall. The route consists of historic



Annual Hudson Crossing Park Cardboard Boat Race. (Hudson Crossing Park)



Victory Woods boardwalk trail in Saratoga National Park. (NPS)





Champlain Canalway Trail bike tour at Lock 4 on the Champlain Canal. (Champlain Canalway Working Group)



"The Flight" (today called "The Combine") is a series of five locks on the Glens Falls Feeder Canal in Fort Edward, which raised/lowered canal boats a total of 55 vertical feet. (Wikipedia)

towpaths, on-street bicycle routes, community attractions, and connections to several regional trail networks. Development of the trail has been spearheaded by the Champlain Canalway Working Group, a grassroots organization of community leaders and trail enthusiasts along the entire corridor. Through a segment-by-segment approach to design and construction, the group has unified communities along the canal and nearby Saratoga Springs and Glens Falls. Each summer, the group sponsors a bike tour that features special places and good food along the canal.

Along the Champlain Canalway Trail, visitors and residents enjoy events and activities sponsored by numerous historic, recreational, and environmental organizations. Key destinations along the trail include

**Saratoga National Historical Park**—with several historic sites, trails, birding sites, and interpretive areas to explore in Stillwater and Saratoga ([www.nps.gov/sara](http://www.nps.gov/sara)).

**Hudson Crossing Park**, located on the Lock 5 island just north of Schuylerville, offers interpretive trails, picnic areas, and a play garden. A floating dock welcomes through-boaters to stay for up to 48 hours, and a kayak launch on the Riverwalk Sensory Trail provides access to the Hudson River and Champlain Canal. The park offers a variety of annual events, including a cardboard boat race, a K9 Easter egg hunt, a birding challenge for kids, and a triathlon. Find more at [www.hudsoncrossingpark.org](http://www.hudsoncrossingpark.org).

The historic **Glens Falls Feeder Canal** was originally constructed in 1822 to supply water from the Hudson River to the highest point

on the Champlain Canal near Fort Edward. The seven-mile Feeder Canal is the last remaining original canal in New York State and is now recognized as a National Historic Place. Today, the Feeder Canal Alliance is dedicated to preserving and promoting the Feeder Canal and its towpath trail through environmental education and recreation—all with a glimpse into the past. You can canoe or kayak the Feeder Canal as it flows from the Feeder Dam in Queensbury through Glens Falls, Hudson Falls, and Kingsbury. The nine-mile towpath trail is open year-round for walking, running, bicycling, birding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The Alliance hosts the Glens Falls BrewFest, an annual canoe/kayak race, an open house at the Silos, and fall pumpkin painting. Learn more at [www.feeder canal.org](http://www.feeder canal.org).

“there has come upon these places an indescribable mellowness,  
a subtle ripeness that only time can give such things.”

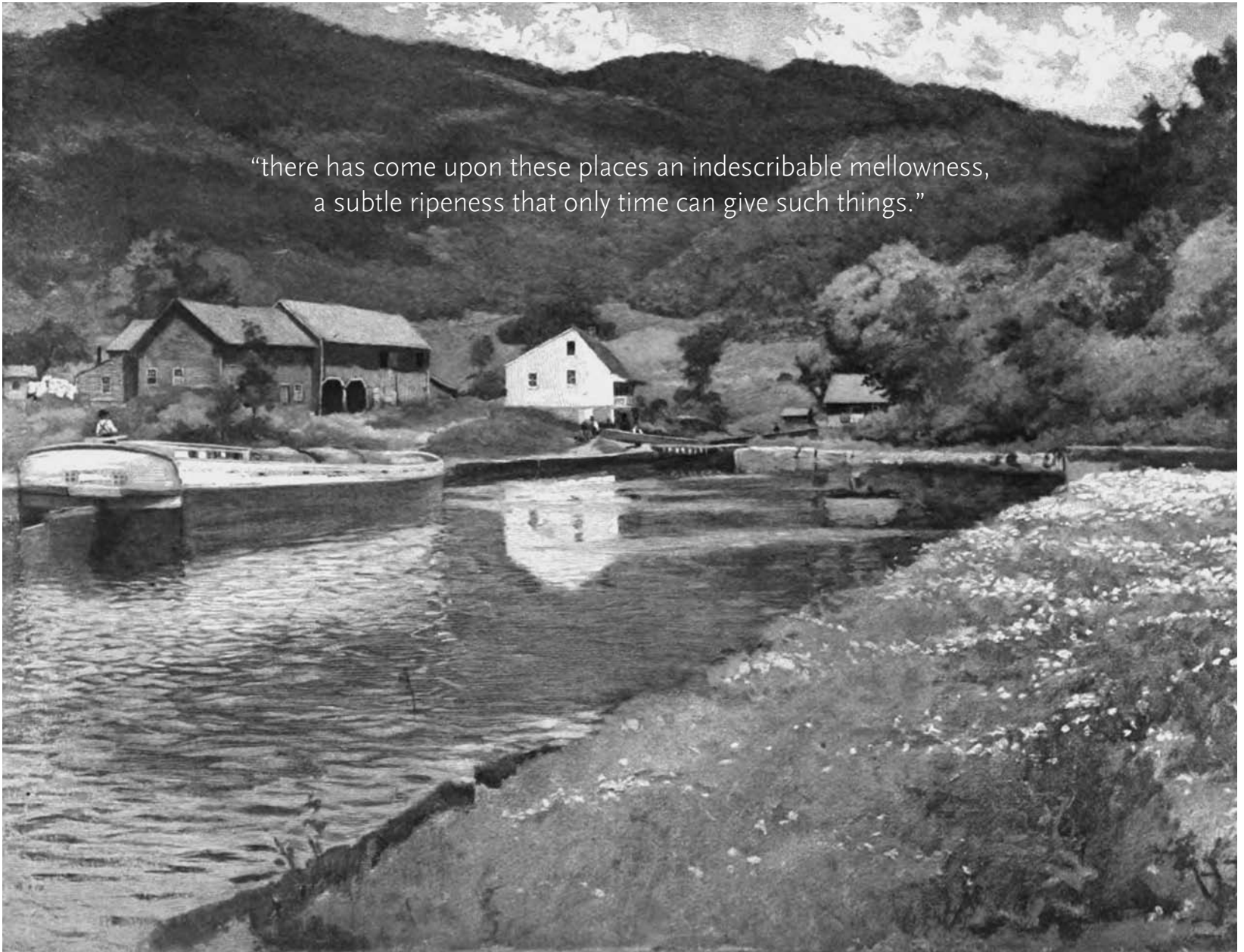


Illustration and text by Howard Pyle, published in “Through Inland Waters, Part II,” *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January 1897.

## Selected Reading

Two volumes in the Lakes to Locks Passage *Waterways of War* series offer a traveler's guide to the battles fought through this valley: *The French and Indian War and the Turning Point of the American Revolution*, available from [Lakestolocks.org](http://Lakestolocks.org).

*Roadside Geology of New York*, by Bradford Van Diver (Mountain Press Publishing, 1985) explains the complexities of local geology in laymen's terms.

*The Mohicans and their Land, 1609-1730*, by Shirley W. Dunn (Purple Mountain Press, 1994), traces early Dutch and English land transactions with the local Mohicans, providing details about Mohican life at the time of European contact.

*Sails and Steam in the Mountains* (revised edition), by Russell P. Bellico (Purple Mountain Press, 2001) discusses the maritime and military history of Lakes Champlain and George, including detailed discussion of the Champlain Canal and canal boats.

*Lake Champlain Sailing Canal Boats*, by Arthur B. Cohn (Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, 2003) is a well-illustrated book discussing the typology of canal boats.

*The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region*, by Tom Calarco (McFarland & Company, 2004), details the local network that helped slaves escape northward to freedom.

*Life in a Mill Town: Schuylerville and Her Hamlets in the 1920s*, by Todd DeGarmo (Brookside Saratoga County History Center, 1990) contains oral histories of mill workers and canal families.

"Through Inland Waterways," text and illustrations by Howard Pyle, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, Volumes XCII and XCIII, New York, 1896.

New York State Canal Society Oral History Project, on file in the New York State Museum, Albany.



