

Sal Will Be There When You Walk Thru History! (Part II)

By Linda Morzillo, Liz Walsh and Terry McFarland

We are excited that two walks at the 2019 AVA Convention will highlight the Erie Canal. Part I of this article, published in the previous *TAW*, explained the history of this historic canal. This quote, a part of the special display at the New York State Museum in Albany (open through October, 2019), sums up why these walks will be important events as you *Walk Thru History!*

“NO SINGLE ACT – NO PUBLIC MEASURE – EXCEPT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION HAS DONE SO MUCH TO PROMOTE THE PUBLIC PROSPERITY AND TO PRODUCE A NEW ERA IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ERIE CANAL.” - Jesse Hawley
1840

The first walk will be during the convention where walkers will be able to see the eastern terminus of the canal. Near the planned start point of the walk is the impressive Cohoes Falls, ninety feet high and 1000 feet wide. Located very near the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, one can appreciate the need for locks to navigate a safe passage. On this walk, we will view and walk over Lock E2 in Waterford. This is the first of the Flight of Locks (E2 to E6), in Waterford, New York providing passage between the Hudson River and the Mohawk River. In about a half mile, this set of 5 locks allows vessels to change their elevation 169 feet! Even today, this is the largest lift in the shortest distance on any canal system in the world! (Note: The Troy Federal Lock on the Hudson River is sometimes referred to as Lock E1, but it is not a part of the Erie Canal.) The lock system has been changed over time. As walkers navigate through the City of Cohoes, they will pass a historic area that includes signs and remains of part of the original sixteen locks that afforded the original bypass around Cohoes Falls.

The walk route will include Peebles Island State Park and participants will again view Cohoes Falls; this time from the Waterford side. Other sights walkers will see include: an old mill repurposed into the Harmony Mills Apartments, an old water turbine, the site where the Cohoes Mastodon was found, the old Champlain Tow Path, now used as a walk and bike trail, Waterford Harbor where boats can moor along the terminal wall (be sure to notice the map of the Barge Canal etched into the concrete), and the museum on Peebles Island, which tells its history.

Not only was the canal era important to this area as there are some remnants of breastworks on Peebles Island dating from the Revolutionary War. As you walk this area, be sure to read the plaques describing the roles of Thaddeus Kosciuszko and John Burgoyne. You truly will be *Walking Thru History!*

The Niagara Frontier Volkssport Club will host a post-convention walk which will feature the western end of the Erie Canal. At this point, water traffic entered or exited the Lake Erie and thus, the Great Lakes. Large ships from the Midwest off-loaded grain onto canal barges to be transported east. It is said one could walk across the Buffalo River from boat deck to boat deck without getting one's feet wet; it was such a hive of activity! A short time ago, construction began on a parking lot for the Buffalo and Erie County Naval Museum and Historic Ships. What a thrill it was when workers found the foundations for the shops, taverns and warehouses that lined the Terminus of the Erie Canal! It has become the focal point for this historical area and recreational venue.

Walkers will see an 1833 lighthouse in the adjacent marina area as well as some of the first grain elevators – some are still in use! The historic ship canal has been transformed by restaurants, bars and sports venues. Thus, the Queen City of the Lakes owes its existence to the Erie Canal. In addition, walkers will be treated to many architectural gems, including Louis Sullivan's prototypical skyscraper. Buffalo locals have a slogan "My city smells like Cheerios" because General Foods makes them in Buffalo – except when they are making Fruit Loops!

If your travels take you on the New York State Thruway, I-90, you may wish to stop at recently restored locks during your journeys. Look for them when traveling eastbound near milepost 308 between Exit 41 and 40 or westbound between exits 28 and 29 near milepost 187.

We are so excited that walkers will see these fascinating and historic sites! "You'll always know your neighbor, and you'll always know your pal, if you've ever navigated on the Erie Canal."