



Erie Canalway News Release

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2009 ERIE CANALWAY HERITAGE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Recipients offer successful models of heritage development

WATERFORD, NY - The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to announce the Village of Brockport as the recipient of the 2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence. Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum in Spencerport and the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor's Center in Lockport won Honorable Mention awards.

"This year's winners provide innovative models for preserving our heritage and stimulating community and economic revitalization," said Joe Callahan, Chair of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. "We hope people will visit each of these sites to see for themselves what great places they are."

The Heritage Award honors and celebrates significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognizes excellence in advancing the goals of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan. A five-person independent jury selected award recipients based on a written application and site visit, which included meetings with officials at each site, as well as community leaders, municipal representatives, and other stakeholders.

Award recipients will be recognized at an Award Luncheon Ceremony at noon at the Ithaca Yacht Club in Ithaca during the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission annual meeting on Wednesday, June 24, 2009.

2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence - Village of Brockport

A long-term, community-wide effort to make the Village of Brockport a more attractive home, workplace, and destination for travelers has strengthened Brockport's economy, while preserving the integrity of this Victorian village on the Erie Canal. Brockport's multifaceted plan included four major components: revitalizing its canalfront, preserving historic structures, making Main Street vibrant, and building community pride. Brockport's emphasis on *living its history*, rather than simply preserving it, led to innovative approaches to heritage development, benefitting residents and visitors alike.

“Our accomplishments have been possible only because Brockporters have been amazingly willing to volunteer their time, money, and effort and three successive Village administrations have given unstinting support,” said William Andrews, Chair of the Village of Brockport’s Historic Preservation Board.

Brockport’s 1998 Canalfront Master Plan and enrollment in the NYS Certified Local Government program provided guidance and access to financial resources. Strategic pursuit of a number of grants and community-wide fundraising efforts enabled the village to rehabilitate its canal wall, institute a historic home improvement program and, in 2005, open its Welcome Center along the canal.

The Welcome Center, staffed by 100 volunteers, now serves 600 boaters annually and has enabled Brockport to become a destination for canal travelers. Simple but clever amenities, such as free bicycles and wagons for groceries, facilitate access to shops and other community attractions for canal travelers, pumping more than \$100,000 each year into Brockport’s economy.

2009 Honorable Mention

Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum, Spencerport

The Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum, opened in 2006, constitutes a successful adaptive reuse of a former trolley depot to serve as a visitor center and canal museum on the Erie Canal. Volunteers logged more than 80,000 hours to bring the project to fruition, resulting in renewed community pride and a center for both residents and visitors to gather and celebrate Spencerport’s canal heritage.

“I am so proud to be the historian of a community of people who are interested, and involved in the preservation of their heritage for generations to come,” said Carol Coburn, Ogden/Spencerport Historian. “Nearly 150 volunteers and thousands of hours of work went into creating a fully operational visitor center and Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum. We are very pleased to be recognized for its contribution to the Erie Canalway.”

Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor’s Center, Lockport

Opened in 2005, the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor’s Center serve as a critical starting place for visitors to Lockport, whose historic Flight of Five locks remain “the holy grail” of early canal engineering. The project involved a million dollar transformation of a former historic church and is the result of an innovative partnership among the Niagara County Historical Society, which designed and operates the Discovery Center, the City of Lockport, which operates the visitor center, and The First Presbyterian Church, which owns the building. A coordinated, disciplined, and professional approach to planning and project implementation proved a highly successful method of achieving results.

“It is great to have been selected for such a prestigious award,” shared Douglas Farley, Director of the Erie Canal Discovery Center. “It’s an honor that should be shared with several collaborative partners that worked for many years to see this facility become a reality. In addition to the Niagara County Historical Society, we must thank the City of Lockport, the First Presbyterian Church of Lockport, and the Grigg-Lewis Foundation for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout the planning, construction and daily operation of the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitors’ Center.”

For more information about the award and this year’s recipients, visit www.eriecanalway.org.

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GET INVOLVED: Awards Program

2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence Village of Brockport

The 2009 Jury selected the Village of Brockport for its outstanding approach to and successful demonstration of heritage preservation and community revitalization. The jury commended the village and its Historic Preservation Board for:

- **Integrating historic preservation into the character of the Village as an ongoing process, rather than a fixed commodity.**
- **Taking a holistic approach to heritage development with a range of projects, from simple to sophisticated, that could be replicated in other canal communities;**
- **Providing technical assistance and local tax abatement to property owners to promote preservation of historic structures;**
- **Citizen driven programs and projects;**
- **Exceptional efforts to facilitate connections between waterfront and Main Street, including walking tours, free bicycles, and grocery wagons for canal patrons.**



Street signs in Brockport showcase the village's heritage.



Welcome Center at Harvester Park on the Erie Canal



Visitors can borrow free bikes to get around town.

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Project Description

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Against the backdrop of a crumbling manufacturing and industrial economic base facing many upstate New York communities in the 1980s and 90s, Brockporters sought a way forward that would capitalize on the village's strengths. Brockport's multifaceted plan included four major components: revitalizing its canalfront, preserving historic structures, making Main Street vibrant, and building community pride.

Working through a number of volunteer organizations and with the assistance of the College of Brockport faculty and students, Brockport citizens identified, preserved, and built upon the best elements of the village: its historic architecture and Victorian streetscapes, its access to and from the canal, its walkable neighborhoods, and the spirit of volunteerism of its residents.

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Further, Brockporters developed a *museum without walls* so that residents and visitors would experience Brockport's heritage as part of the fabric of its present village life. This approach reaches a wide audience, fostering a sense of place and instilling a preservation ethic. Brockport's living museum includes interpretive signs throughout the village, self-guided walking tours, public art, rotating displays in public venues, such as the library, supermarket, and senior center, and more than 50 buildings on the State

and National Register and 37 Historic Landmarks.

By living its history, the Village of Brockport honors its past and provides an outstanding model for canal communities seeking to build a strong local economy and community for present residents and future generations.



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