

**Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission
Presents**

2008

Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence

This award honors and celebrates significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognizes excellence in the implementation of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan.



In partnership with the National Park Service

2008 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to announce the recipients of the Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence. Winners enliven the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and provide innovative models for preserving our heritage and stimulating community and economic revitalization.

2008 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence Recipients

- Canal Place, Little Falls
- School Street Hydroelectric Facility, Brookfield Renewable Power, Cohoes

2008 Honorable Mention

- Fort Plain Free Library, Fort Plain
- Historic Palmyra's Wm. Phelps General Store and Home, Palmyra

Background

Stretching 521 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor encompasses 4,834 square miles in 23 counties and is home to 2.7 million people. The Federal designation as a National Heritage Corridor recognizes the significance of New York's canals to the state and the nation.

However, the federal government does not own or manage national heritage area lands as it does with traditional national parks. Instead, people, businesses, non-profit historical, educational, and environmental organizations, towns, cities, counties, and the State of New York work together to protect the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and prepare for its future.

The Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence honors and celebrates the significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognizes excellence in the implementation of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan.

For more information, visit www.eriecanalway.org.

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Canal Place, Little Falls

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to award a 2008 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence to Canal Place. The 2008 Jury selected Canal Place for its outstanding example of citizen driven economic and community revitalization that protected and reused 19th century mill buildings along the canal in Little Falls. The jury commended the project for:

- Drawing on existing physical assets, including historic structures and waterfront location, in development planning;
- Contributing to waterfront revitalization in Little Falls;
- Improving physical linkages and reducing perceived barriers between the city and its waterfront;
- Successfully re- using former mill buildings and including diverse business offerings such as antique and boutique shops, arts center, theater, restaurants, and apartments.
- Cultivating an extraordinary “sense of place” among business owners, employees, and residents of Canal Place;
- Celebrating and preserving the past, while offering a positive vision for the future.

Project Description

In the middle of what was once an extensive manufacturing district in the City of Little Falls, the demolition of an abandoned factory revealed the historic beauty of two deteriorating 150 year old stone buildings and sparked the imaginations of local property owners who formed the Canal Place Development Association in 1988. The site of the factory became a park, another park was built alongside the canal, and grant money was secured to make a host of improvements to the area.

The development group renovated one of the stone buildings for use as an antique center, boutique shops, and apartments, transforming a run-down building into a showcase. Their success prompted investors to buy the other stone building, where a second antique shop was located, establishing Little Falls as a destination for antique hunters. Restaurants, galleries, and an arts center round out a diverse cultural mix that makes Canal Place a unique historic gem along the Erie Canal.

As a testament to these efforts and to the significance of the site, Canal Place has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the official list of properties recognized as significant in the history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture of the Empire State and the nation. ☪

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**School Street Hydroelectric Facility,
Brookfield Renewable Power, Cohoes**

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to award a 2008 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence to School Street Hydroelectric Facility, managed by Brookfield Renewable Power. The 2008 Jury selected the facility as a model for corporate leadership in community revitalization. The jury commended the project for:

- Improving power plant structures, access roads, and grounds maintenance in a manner that preserves the historical integrity of the facility and integrates it into an urban setting and the Harmony Mills Historic District;
- Recognizing the tremendous natural and recreational resource of the Cohoes Falls and Mohawk River and its significance to residents of Cohoes, and improving public access and viewing opportunities at Overlook Park;
- Exemplary cooperation with city officials, local historical review boards, the State Historic Preservation Office, and other stakeholders;
- Contributing to economic revitalization and quality of life in the City of Cohoes.

Project Description

The School Street facility, built in 1915, overlooks the 75- foot Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River in the heart of the Harmony Mills Historic District of Cohoes. The Erie Canal and Harmony Mills were the mainstay of the city's economy from the 1800s through 1930. In February 2007, plant owner and operator Brookfield Renewable Power received a 40- year license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to operate the facility.

Prior to the license renewal, Brookfield Renewable Power initiated a comprehensive improvement project at this historic power plant, which included masonry repair, painting, concrete resurfacing, removal of retired- in- place above ground transmission lines, new fencing, and removal of vegetation along the bank of the power canal. It also made major improvements to the adjacent Overlook Park, a public overlook to the Cohoes Falls, and Craner Veterans Park.

Collaboration with the city, stakeholders groups, and residents helped Brookfield demonstrate its commitment to the community. The School Street facility remains an integral part of the industrial heritage of Cohoes, while at the same time contributing to the city's future. Aesthetic and recreational enhancements to the facility, access to Cohoes Falls, and improvements to surrounding parks, together with revitalization of the historic Harmony Mills adjacent to the facility, are creating a dynamic destination for residents and visitors. ☺

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HONORABLE MENTION

Fort Plain Free Library, Fort Plain

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to award Honorable Mention to the Fort Plain Free Library. The 2008 Jury selected the library for Phase I of renovation and restoration to the facility, enabling it to serve as a welcome and visitor center for Erie Canalway Trail users, boaters, and other visitors to Fort Plain. The jury commended the project for:

- Providing an “anchor” for the community as a central meeting place with “something for everyone,” including traditional library users, genealogical researchers, cyclists, boaters, and other travelers;
- Preserving and showcasing community and canal history of Fort Plain;
- Contributing to local and regional economic and recreational revitalization plans;
- Forging partnerships with neighboring towns to further expand visitor services;
- Inspiring renewed community pride.

Project Description

The renovation and restoration of the Welcome Center at the Fort Plain Free Library is Phase I of a larger repair, renovation, restoration, and expansion of the entire facility. Phase I concentrated on the oldest section of the building, enabling a house erected in the early 1800s to meet the needs of 21st century library users, while preserving the historical nature of the original structure.

Work included repair and restoration of the library’s front porch, with the addition of a handicapped accessible ramp, insulation of the oldest section of the building, and window and lighting upgrades to reduce energy costs. Two former front parlors in the library now provide much needed community meeting space and display artifacts and memorabilia of local historical interest. The library’s newly configured entranceway hosts an assortment of pamphlets about local sites of interest, as well as information and images of the Erie Canal in Fort Plain from 1825 to 1918.

Community interest and involvement in the library project has been strong throughout: clients of the Liberty Day Treatment/Montgomery County ARC facility packed, moved, and stored the library’s entire non-fiction collection so that restoration could proceed; a local merchant established a garden alongside the library; an artist created a welcome sign featuring the Erie Canal; and a local historian and canal employee donated his collection of 1,500 slides depicting the area’s history. The renovation project has enabled the Fort Plain Free Library to strengthen the historic and distinctive sense of place of the village among residents and visitors and demonstrates the value of preserving and showcasing Fort Plain’s heritage. ☪

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HONORABLE MENTION

**Historic Palmyra's Wm. Phelps General Store and Home,
Palmyra**

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to award Honorable Mention to Historic Palmyra Wm. Phelps General Store and Home. The 2008 Jury selected the museum restoration project for its contribution to preserving the history and architectural heritage of Palmyra, New York. The jury commended the project for:

- Maintaining a high level of historical integrity in its restoration of original Erie Canal buildings from the 1826 period;
- Bringing Erie Canal history to life for students, residents, and visitors through engaging tours and public programming;
- Ongoing efforts to showcase Palmyra as “Queen of Canal Towns”;
- Exemplifying what a small organization with limited resources can accomplish by mobilizing volunteers and joining with community leaders to achieve its mission.

Project Description

Historic Palmyra acquired the Wm. Phelps General Store and Home, as well as the Palmyra Print Shop, in 1977. Through many years of effort by Historic Palmyra and hundreds of volunteers, the dilapidated, original three- story Erie Canal building was transformed into a centerpiece of 150 years of Erie Canal life in Palmyra.

The store and home are now counted among four museums operated by Historic Palmyra. Visitors are able to see a variety of artifacts dating from 1826 at these original canal structures. Hundreds of school children benefit from museum tours and programs each year. The museum is readily accessible to travelers arriving by boat, bicycle, car, or on foot.

While the Wm. Phelps General Store and Home are remarkable for preserving the past, the museum's staff, board, and volunteers are further commended for contributing to the promotion of the Village of Palmyra itself as a unique community on the Erie Canal today. Historic Palmyra actively participates in community events, and promotes the preservation of the village's historic assets for the benefit of today's residents and visitors and for future generations. ☪

Many thanks to our jury.

Our independent jury was made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds who share a common desire to help foster the distinctive sense of place of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The jury reviewed applications, selected finalists, participated in site visits with applicants, stakeholders, and community leaders, and chose award recipients. Their expertise and perspective were invaluable to our program's success.

Keith E. Giles, PE, LS, Senior Vice President/Branch Manager
Greenman - Pedersen, Inc.

David Kay, Senior Extension Associate
Community & Rural Development Institute, Cornell University

Leslie Knauf, Marketing Consultant
Fox Lair Marketing

Tania Werbizky, Regional Director of Technical and Grant Programs
Preservation League of New York State

Ceres Zabel, Director/Founder
The Odyssey School of Fine Arts

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Look for our call for applications in January 2009. We will be reviewing applicants in the spring and announcing 2009 recipients in June.

For details and application materials, visit www.eriecanalway.org or contact us at:

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