

Potpourri of Materials

Associated with the
Restoration
of the
Enlarged Erie Canal Lock #56
At
Lyons, New York

A Special Edition for the:

ERIE CANAL WAY / NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Erie's Restoration Interests Everyone, Inc.
July - 2005

E.R.I.E.
Erie's Restoration Interests Everyone

*Rescuing our Erie Canal
for Generations to Come*

A Word About this Document

Wayne County is rich in the history of New York States Erie Canal System. Still present are the remains of the earliest 1817 canal to the new Erie Canal. In the thirty or so miles reside historic locks, aqueducts, a change bridge and canal prisms.

In the late 1980's citizens, led by Mark DeCracker, founder of Erie's Restoration Interests Everyone (E.R.I.E.), began in earnest efforts to identify and protect important historic canal infrastructure. As sites were identified, volunteers worked together to clear them of brush and return them to the people. E.R.I.E.'s philosophy also included making the canal assessable. In this spirit volunteers also cleared miles of towpath for recreational use.

There was a period of tremendous activity. Volunteers were excited by the vision of having one of the best interpretive regions about our canal in New York. This movement lasted until around 1998, when discouragement was caused by project funding difficulties.

The greatest discouragement was rooted in the lack of success to secure adequate funding for the E-56 project. E.R.I.E. focused on this site as a perfect combination of historic and contemporary canal features. The locks and "grocery" at E-56 interpreted much of the structures found elsewhere on our canal. There was and still is a very strong possibility that the locks themselves could be re-watered and placed back into operation. If accomplished, this would have been the only set of locks from the Enlarged Erie Canal era to be fully operationally restored. What an asset for our communities and educational resources. The vision is still very much alive in the minds of E.R.I.E. and many others who value the heritage of our county and state.

This potpourri of documents, images and drawings is an effort to show our past efforts and hopefully trigger a resurgence of interest. It is by no means complete or particularly scholarly in its content. Instead what is here is more of a desperate plea to re-open the effort and begin to return to the people of Wayne County, New York State and the nation an important Erie Canal Historic Site.

We believe that a major effort to preserve our nation is to preserve its heritage. Time is relentless in its ability to erode all that our forefather's gave to us. In restoring these structures we tell a wonderful story of men, women and even children working long and hard to bring to us what we all enjoy today. Frankly, it is difficult to really describe the joy that is felt when you complete a project, especially one that truly will make a difference.

If this project has peaked your interest let us know. We will be honored to supply more specific information concerning E-56 and other projects.

Time is truly running out. Valuable structures, here in Wayne County and elsewhere are rapidly disappearing. Either through neglect or urban renewal programs. If we act now much can be stabilized and later restored. The benefit will be the preservation of our heritage and certainly creating appealing communities where people will move to and raise families.

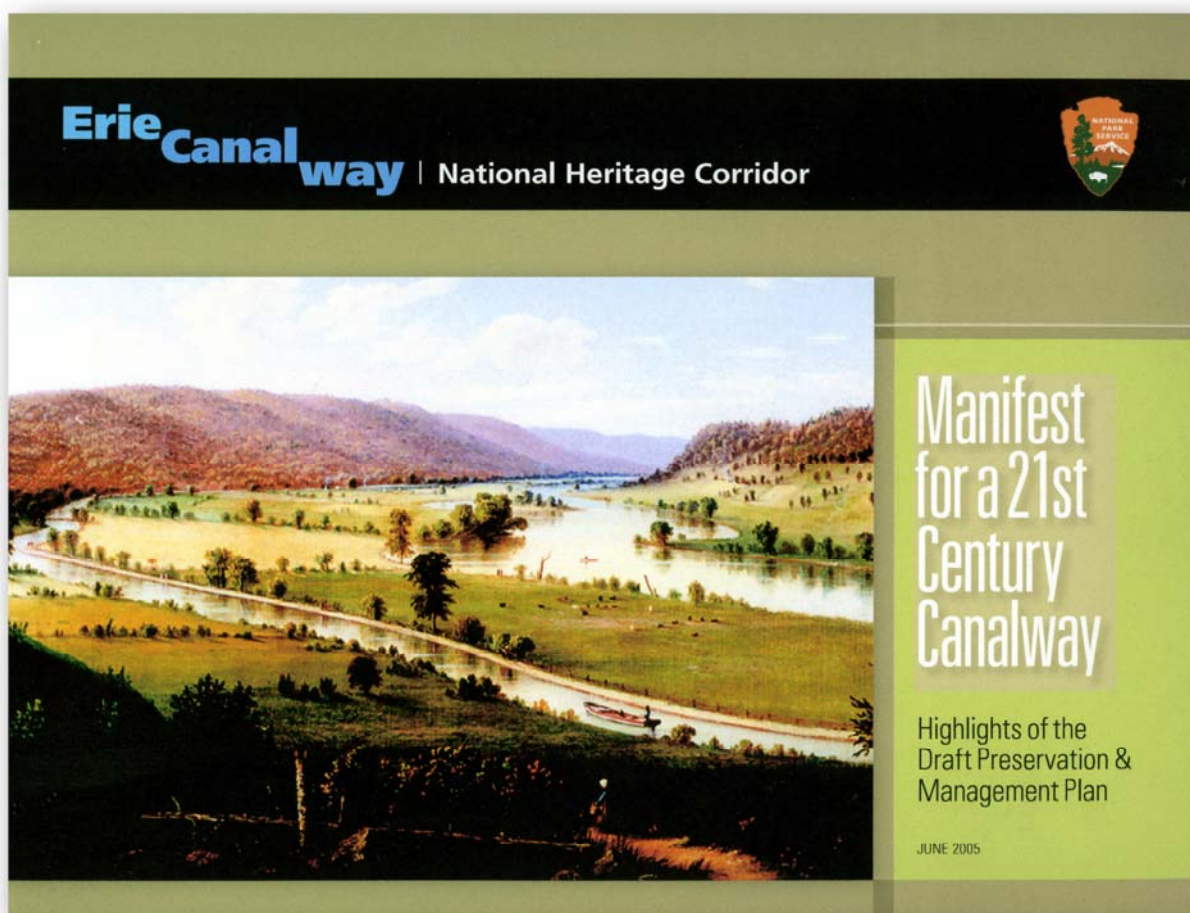
We appreciate your interests and hope to here from you soon.

John R. Groves
Member, E.R.I.E.
May 4th, 2005
Chili, New York

This monograph was created to provide an overview of the potential advantages of restoration and interpretation of a historic Enlarged (1835-1905) Erie Canal site. In the recent past there has been a resurgence of interest in our canal. With the creation of the **National Heritage Corridor** initiative the Wayne County E-56 project should be seriously considered.

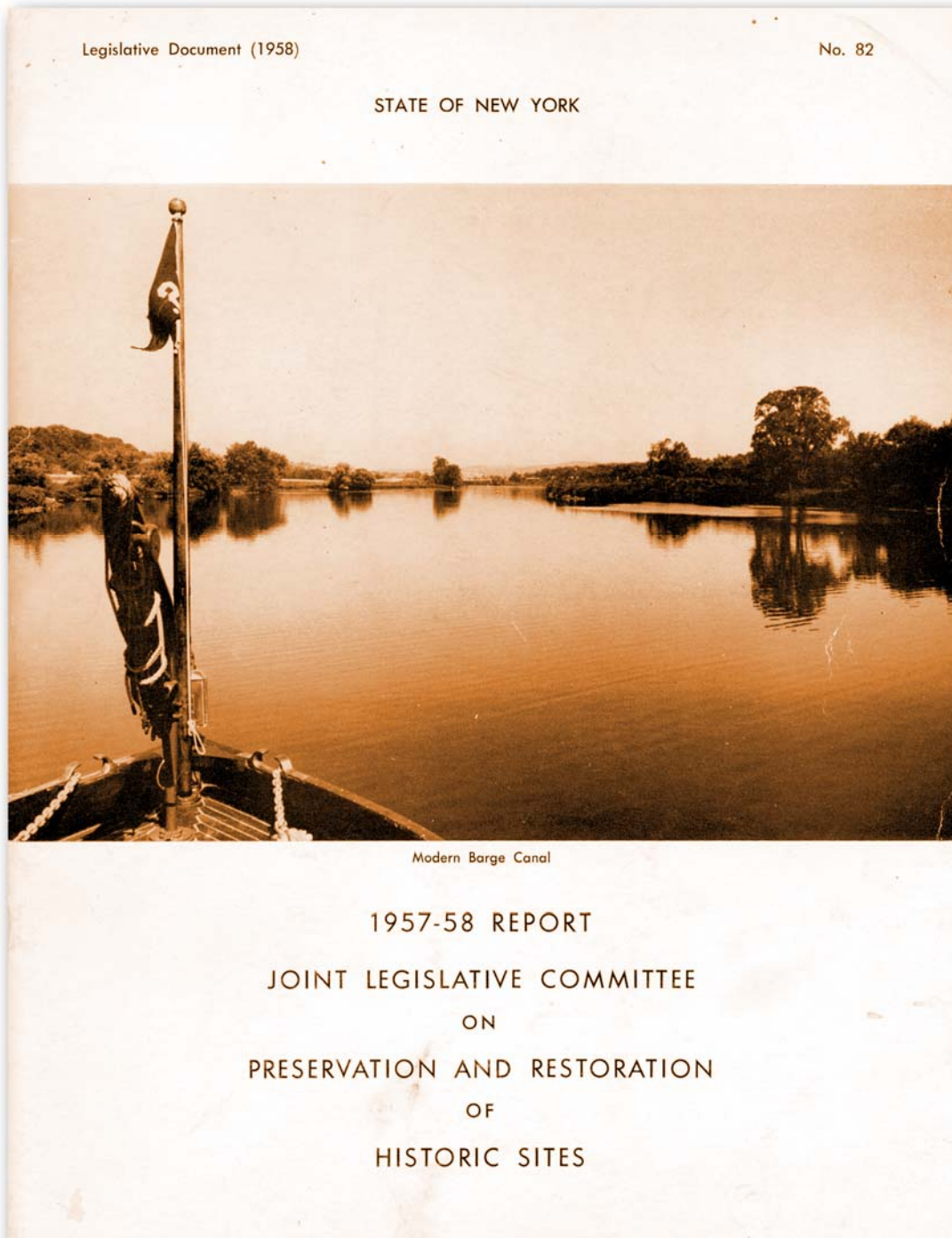
Nearly every aspect of 19th century canal infrastructure can be found within a short distance of this lock. E-56 is the only enlarged and doubled lock on the historic system where a lock chamber can be re-watered. From an educational point of view, restoration of this site will provide schools and visitors a unique opportunity to see how the locks actually worked.

The communities of Macedon, Palmyra and Lyons have much to offer the **National Heritage Corridor**. E-56 will certainly be a center piece and a great place to visit.



Not so long ago...

A report to the Legislature of the State of New York, submitted February 25, 1958



This report is the result of a survey along the Erie Canal, then the New York State Barge Canal to discover and identify potential historic sites. What is included here is the Resolution No. 207—Historic Sites. This resolution clearly spells out the importance of preserving sites. Nothing has changed...

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

Pursuant to concurrent resolution adopted March 21, 1957, the Joint Legislative Committee on Preservation and Restoration of Historic Sites respectfully submits this report covering the work of its investigation to and including the present date.

February 25, 1958

MILDRED F. TAYLOR, *Chairman*
ROBERT E. McEWEN, *Vice-Chairman*
JOHN MORRISSEY, *Secretary*
ALBERT BERKOWITZ
GRANT JOHNSON
ARCHIBALD DOUGLAS
BERTRAM L. PODELL

1957 RESOLUTION NO. 207—HISTORIC SITES

March 21, 1957

RULES COMMITTEE—WHEREAS, From its earliest settlement, the state of New York has continuously played a tremendous role in the historical and economic development of our country, and

WHEREAS, In the course of its historical and economic growth many areas, sites, places and structures have been marked with particular significance and historical importance, and

WHEREAS, The necessity to preserve and restore these links with the heritage of our past is recognized to be of great importance, and

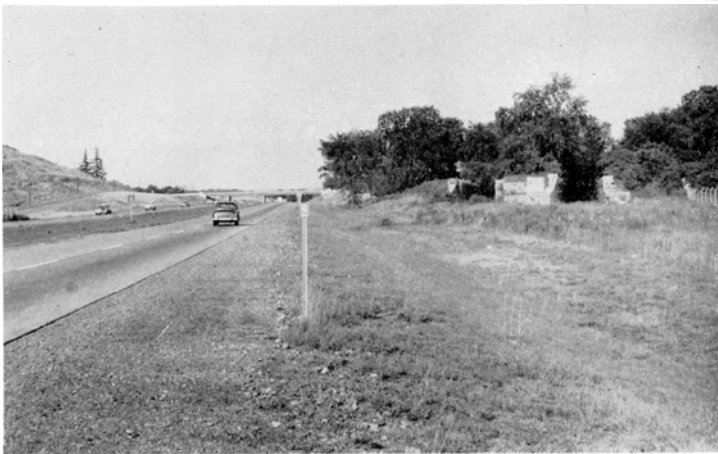
WHEREAS, The acquisition, restoration and preservation of these historic sites and structures during the past quarter century has been left almost entirely to private groups within the state, and

WHEREAS, Numerous historical sites and places, and locations of economic development such as the extensive nineteenth century canal system, which was chiefly responsible for much of the economic growth of the state, have been available for acquisition and development, but have not been acquired or developed, and

WHEREAS, The necessity for establishing a permanent program for the acquisition, restoration, preservation and development of historic sites and structures is well recognized, and

WHEREAS, The necessity for providing authoritative direction for such preservation and restoration as well as for recommending and for providing adequate continuous financing therefor, is equally well recognized; now therefore, be it

Resolved (if the Senate concur), That a joint legislative committee on historic site and historic canal preservation be, and the same hereby is, created, to consist of three members of the Senate to be appointed by the temporary president of the Senate, and four members of the Assembly, to be appointed by the speaker of the Assembly, with full power and authority (1) to make a thorough and comprehensive study, survey and investigation of all historic sites and historic canals and historic structures, for the purpose of ascertaining the feasibility of preservation, restoration and/or reconstruction of such sites, canals and structures; establishment of museums; and development of programs for making available to the general public the educational and historic benefits of such projects, and (2)



Port Byron Lock of the Old Erie

Remove not the ancient landmarks
Which thy fathers have set

—Proverbs 22:8

NOTE: The above is Lock #52 as seen from the New York State Thruway. This is before volunteers cleared the brush for better visibility. Also note the Proverb! J. Groves

to make a thorough and comprehensive study and investigation of the estimated costs of such projects and of methods and means for providing for payment of such costs; and be it further

Resolved (if the Senate concur), That such committee organize by the selection from its members of a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. The members of the committee shall serve without compensation for their services but shall be entitled to their actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Any vacancy in the membership of the committee shall be filled by the officer making the original appointment. Such committee may employ and at pleasure remove such counsel and other employees and assistants as may be necessary and fix their compensation within the amount made available therefor herein. Such committee shall have the power to designate and consult with advisors, and may request and shall receive from all public officers, departments and agencies of the state and its political subdivisions such assistance and data as will enable it properly to consummate its work, and generally shall have all the powers of a legislative committee as provided by the legislative law; and be it further

Resolved (if the Senate concur), That the committee shall report on or before March first, nineteen hundred fifty-eight, the result of its study and investigation proposals as it deems necessary to make its recommendations effective, and be it further

Resolved (if the Senate concur), That the sum of \$25,000 (twenty-five thousand dollars) or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated from the legislative contingent fund and made immediately available to pay the expenses of such committee, including personal service, in carrying out the provisions of this resolution. Such money shall be payable after audit and upon warrant of the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the chairman of the committee in the manner provided by law.

Images from this Report



The Joint Legislative Committee on Inspection Trip



The Old Erie

Enlarged Erie Canal Lock #56

1835-1918

The Enlarged Erie Canal was the result of the tremendous success of the original Clinton's Ditch (1825-1835). The original canal was paid for in just 10 years after opening. With the flush of money and increased demands a larger canal was proposed and built. The Enlarged was wider, deeper and had fewer locks and was somewhat shorter by removing unnecessary loops.

E-56 was built around 1840 as a single chamber lock. In the 1870's and 80's the lock was lengthened and doubled. The grocery adjacent to the lock is a bit of a mystery as to when it was built and its location, literally into the berm of the canal.

A Vision for the Future: Poor House Lock

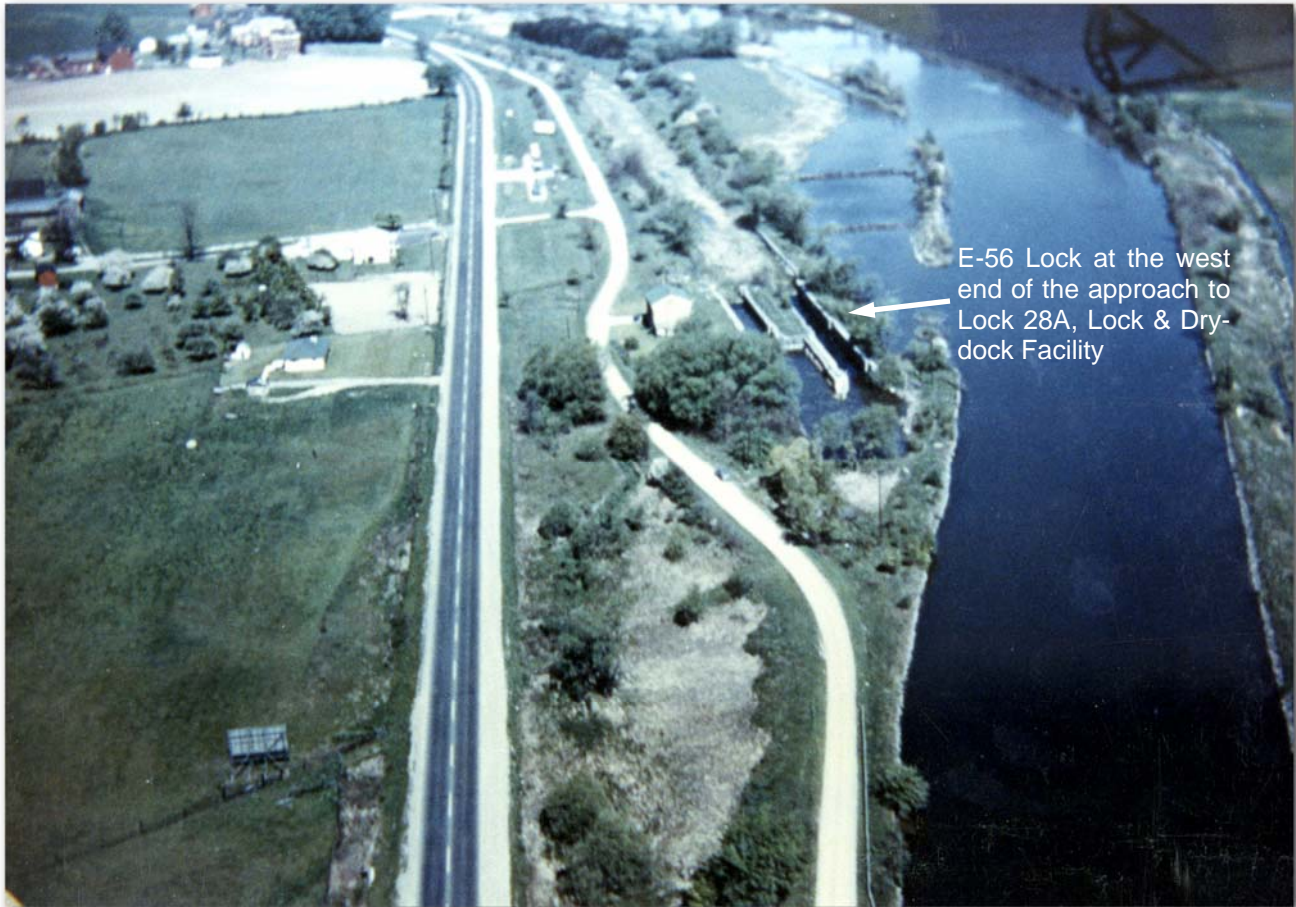
In 1994 Bristol Development & Planning held an exploratory workshop concerning the preservation and restoration of the Poor House Lock*. Ambitious plans were discussed and guide lines established. Unfortunately, the lack of adequate funding put the plan on indefinite hold.

Following is a report of that session and some of the plans discussed. The vision foresaw a multi-use facility as a focus on the Wayne County Canal corridor. With a Visitor's Center and the only operating Enlarged Erie Canal era lock, the feeling was that this area would certainly take a leadership role in canal interpretation.

The article, written then is as true today. The opportunities for community development and canal history are legitimate and strong.

**Poor House Lock is another familiar term used to describe Enlarged Erie Canal Lock #56. It referred to the nearby Poor House, since destroyed at the Wayne County Jail Complex.*

Enlarged Erie Canal Lock E-56 Located west of the Village of Lyons, New York



This aerial view (Date unknown, although believed to be the late 40's, early 50's) shows the overall site of the historic Lock E-56. On the right is the existing Erie Canal along which will be the Erie Canal Heritage Trail. This trail system will follow both the present and historic Erie Canal between Tonawandas and Albany, New York.

On the south side of the site is New York Route 31. This highway in New York travels closely to the canal state-wide. Visitors to this lock and other sites of interest would naturally travel this highway. Access to the site is also convenient from the New York State Thruway. Signage directing visitors could also be installed.

Noteworthy is the rural aspects of the site. Even today little has changed, with the exception of a few mobile homes nearby. Historic maps of the immediate site indicate other structures near the grocery that could be useful as facility resources. The "Poor House" grocery had been designated as the "Visitors Center". Here interpretive exhibits and other associated items (retail) can be offered to visitors.

My personal vision sees this site and Visitor's Center as a valuable "first stop" for anyone interested in exploring area Erie Canal sites and history.



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF E.R.I.E.
ERIE'S RESTORATION INTERESTS EVERYONE, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 165
LYONS, NEW YORK 14489-0165

During the active periods of the early 1990's Erie's Restoration Interests Everyone, Inc. had a monthly newsletter. It was published using the Commodore Amiga 2000 series desktop computer.

The newsletter was virtually the only publication at the time primarily concerned with preservation projects on the Erie Canal. It was very popular with our membership.

The following reproduction of the **Erie Express** was published in early 1995 and had the important news of the future plans for Lock E-56. Not all Erie members were able to attend the planning meeting and this issue helped them understand how the project was to be implemented.

In the opening text box is a very insightful statement by Dr. David Ennis, who as early as 1956, already saw the future of this project. Dr Ennis was very interested in this project and did his best to promote it in the 1950's.

Following is a short article by this author and inserts taken from the Bristol Design & Planning. The site as planned then covers several acres and includes facilities on either side of Route 31. The concept was to make this a regional center for early and present Erie Canal lock technology. This concept is enhanced by the close proximity of present Lock 28A.

Lock 28A has many of the contemporary services and structures now used on the canal. This includes a dry dock, machine shops, a small boat basin and section offices.

There is very little, if any, changes in our vision as depicted in the following Erie Express. At best only minor changes are required to meet state/federal standards and whatever new developments have occurred since this 1994 meeting.

ERIE EXPRESS



Winter of 1994/95

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF E.R.I.E.
ERIE'S RESTORATION INTERESTS EVERYONE, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 165
LYONS, NEW YORK 14489-0165

Plans Underway for E-56, the Enlarged Erie Canal's Poorhouse Lock! by John R. Groves

"...At the present time there is no one single location where the broad field of Erie Canal history may be studied. The few remaining old canal structures are slowly but steadily vanishing from the scene. Canal books, documents maps and pictures are scattered in scores of museums and in countless homes - and attics. In no one place can the mighty efforts of the famous canal figures of the past be brought to the public of today. Now, more than ever before, we have cause to derive strength and faith in our future from the example of courageous and far-seeing men of our State who did so much to make possible our present American way of living. A knowledge of this great heritage cannot but serve to make us even better Americans.

In America today more and more "living museums" and historical site restorations are being established, from large scale projects like Williamsburg down to individual homes - all with extraordinary success. As our country matures, its citizens are becoming increasingly historically minded..."

It is appropriate we open this article with the wisdom

of the past. Dr. David Ennis, in his report, A PROSPECTUS FOR AN ERIE CANAL MUSEUM AND A LOCK RESTORATION PROJECT AT THE POORHOUSE LOCK - LYONS, WAYNE COUNTY, NEW YORK, speaks to us about the importance of preservation. This paper was authored in 1956 and speaks to us today.

Dr. Ennis goes on to suggest that the site be developed with a marina, from which our water bound visitors may have access to the site. The paper is comprehensive in that it identifies the site's strategic location to the New York State Thruway, the historic village of Lyons, the birthplace of the Mormon religion in Palmyra and the present location of Lock 28A and Dry-dock Facilities. It's really quite an incredible document, by a man who had far reaching vision.

In 1994, some 38 years later, renewed efforts are underway to restore the site. In the late 1980's E.R.I.E. with the considerable assistance of Pauline

Burnes, was able to produce a site plan which included design and scheduling strategies for restoration of the site. This plan helped form the concept of the site as a "living history" museum and Interpretive center, located centrally in New York State. In the summer of 1994, a meeting was held in Wayne County, which has changed forever the future of E-56.

On July 19, a planning session "Vision for the Future: Design Charette" gave participants an opportunity to present and share ideas for the development of the site. Within this charette, mission statements, drafting of goals and funding were discussed. Also a considerable amount of just plain "brainstorming" was used to help the charett sponsors, Bristol Design & Planning, of Rochester, to create a master plan.

The Master Plan is large and cannot be shared in its original form here in our newsletter, however, excerpts will be provided to give our readers a familiarity of its content. The complete document can be found and examined at the Wayne County Planning Office. Please contact Jim Coloumbe, Project Manager and Wayne County Planner in Lyons.

The plan addresses three major areas:

- 1 - Can the lock be restored?
- 2 - Can the Grocery be restored?
- 3 - How much would this restoration cost?

The planners feel that the above questions can be



Rendering by Penny Cos Gruber shows a potential restoration treatment of the Canalside Grocery at Lock E-56

answered "yes". And the tasks can be realized within a reasonable budget. The realization of these projects must include partnerships, funding and a well thought out phasing plan. Within this criteria it is very likely the project will succeed.

The real strength of the report focuses on the future of the site as a historic canal interpretation center and the economic possibilities it can potentially bring to the Lyons community. It has a quality I really like, "...how to dream big!" As we have seen with the excerpt of Dr. Ennis's report, dreaming of what is possible is really the key to success. We need to approach this project with a vision towards the future.

"What do we have here?" (The following figure is taken directly from the report)

A. Why? ("What do we have here?")

Initial supporting reasons to pursue restoration of Lock E-56 were compelling and positive. It was concluded that the pursuit of each of these areas worked in harmony to further the economic, environmental, recreational and historic nature of the area, while improving the quality of life for local residents.

1. **Archeology:** Through archeologic assessment and exploration more is learned about the history, life and times of the Erie Canal, it's people and technologies. Restorations are performed more accurately, preservation of artifacts ensured, and opportunities for education and hands-on learning experiences enhanced.
2. **Preservation:** The preservation of artifacts and structures maintains historical references to our past. These references can be used in the interpretation of science, technology, social, physical and historical geography.
3. **Restoration:** The restoration of structures and landscapes assists in the preservation of artifacts and structures. It also attracts and provides a forum for students, travelers, interest groups and local residents.
4. **Tourism & Economic Development:** Regional economic development, primarily through the development of the tourism industry and secondarily the improved quality of life, would be enhanced and focused by the comprehensive restoration and development of the project.
5. **Education & Interpretation:** A wealth of opportunities for provision of educational programs and curriculum development are clearly available. Development of interpretive materials supports each of the identified areas of project development and is an educational opportunity in itself.
6. **Recreation:** A comprehensive lock restoration project would provide recreational activities directly related to the project, as well as associated railway, canal and secondary waterways, and entertainment activities and events.
7. **Community Pride & Quality of Life:** Enhanced natural and historical resources, improved environmental quality, and expanded economic, social and recreational opportunities would be provided to the community. The improved quality of life and enhanced physical environment creates community pride and commands awareness of the Region's positive features.

Figure One - from "Vision from the Future". Bristol Design & Planning

How? "Think Big, Start Small"

Bristol Design & Planning, suggests four phases, as follows:

PHASE ONE: represents the first small steps.

This includes bringing the importance of the site to the public's mind. Members of E.R.L.E and others can do much towards this by sharing with others the history and importance of the site. Visit it with your friends and show them what is there. Interpretive signs are now in place to help understand the structures (they will be removed temporarily December to March for revision). Even though they may seem "small steps" you can never know how much your enthusiasm can change how people feel about our canal history.

PHASE TWO: a commitment to establishing individual physical features, renovation details and Linear Park development.

Much of this has been proposed in draft. The site will incorporate a close association with the Village of Lyons and the current Erie Canal. Dock development, pathways, parking and an on site Visitor's Center, will accommodate all our potential visitors. Within Lyons is the Hotchkiss Essential Oil Company building, an important resource, which will be connected to the site by the Linear Park concept.

PHASE THREE: is the major capital expense expenditure phase; rewatering the Lock and establishing a superior point of interest on the Canal.

E-56 is adjacent to the canal and the possibility is real that rewatering can occur. This would allow visitors to observe how an original 1850's lock actually operated. This would be really quite unique to our region, as few, if any remaining Enlarged Erie locks are suitable for this type of restoration. Different types of Lock gates can also be demonstrated, such as the "drop gate", which was found on the "high water" or west end of the Lock.

PHASE FOUR: enhancing existing development features and potentially enlarging the Park area. Each phase builds upon the other and allows the dream to fly as high as the community wishes to travel.

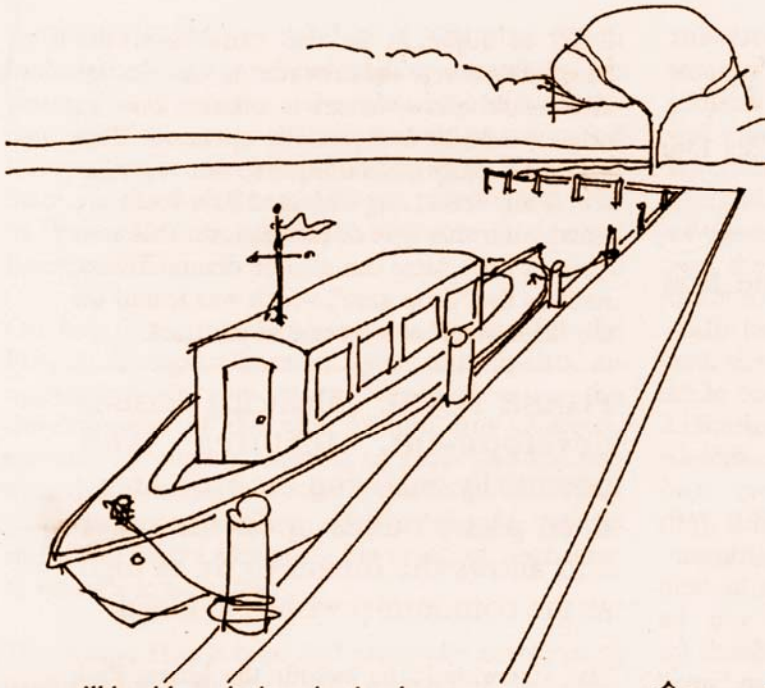
The Statewide Plans include the Linear Park Concept, which means that communities throughout the state, along the canal will participate in park development. Eventually our canal will have trails, parks, marinas and important historical sites to visit. This coordinated effort will put New York State at the top of places to visit in our country. Someday you will be able to hike, boat or ride bicycles along our Erie Canal. Lyons and the Poorhouse site will be important stops along the way.

Expansion of the site can include all three canal eras. Nearby are the remains of the original or "Clinton's Ditch Canal". Archeology may be able to uncover the piers of an aqueduct which is located on Garnargua Creek, about a mile away. (See diagram for details of the Lyons Heritage Area following this article.)

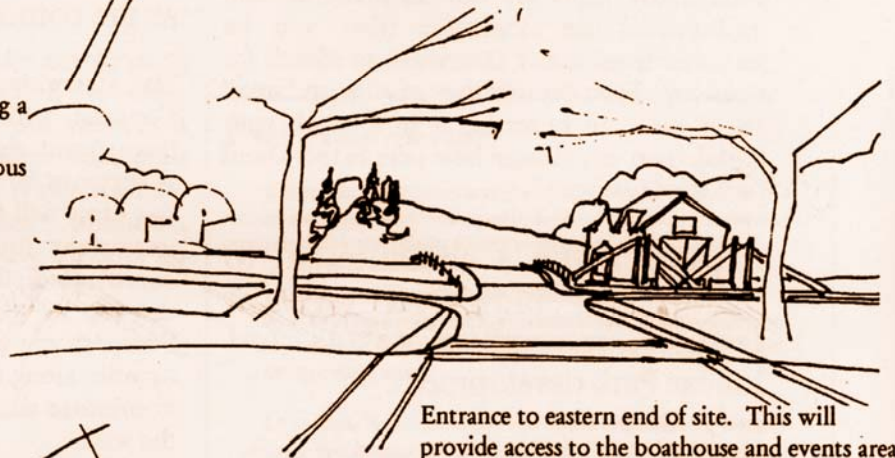
This area, with its trailways and association with the proposed "Erie Canal Scenic Byway" will allow visitors to see many remaining historic canal structures. The Village of Lyons, can be designated as an Urban Cultural Park, which will save the now rapidly disappearing historic buildings. In Wayne County, only Lyons has such direct access to the canal. An asset not to be overlooked!

Historic Lock E-56 and Grocery Restoration and Re- use Study

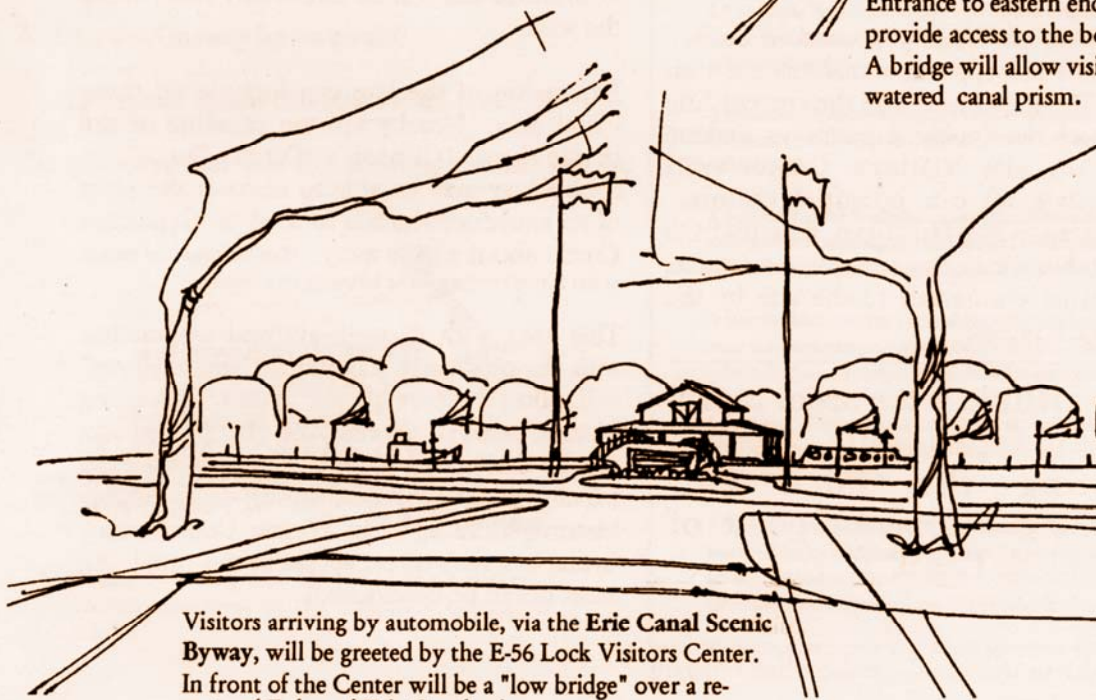
Visualization



Boaters will be able to dock at the site along a wood decked promenade. Docking space will be adequate for numerous craft, including tour boats



Entrance to eastern end of site. This will provide access to the boathouse and events area. A bridge will allow visitors to cross the re-watered canal prism.



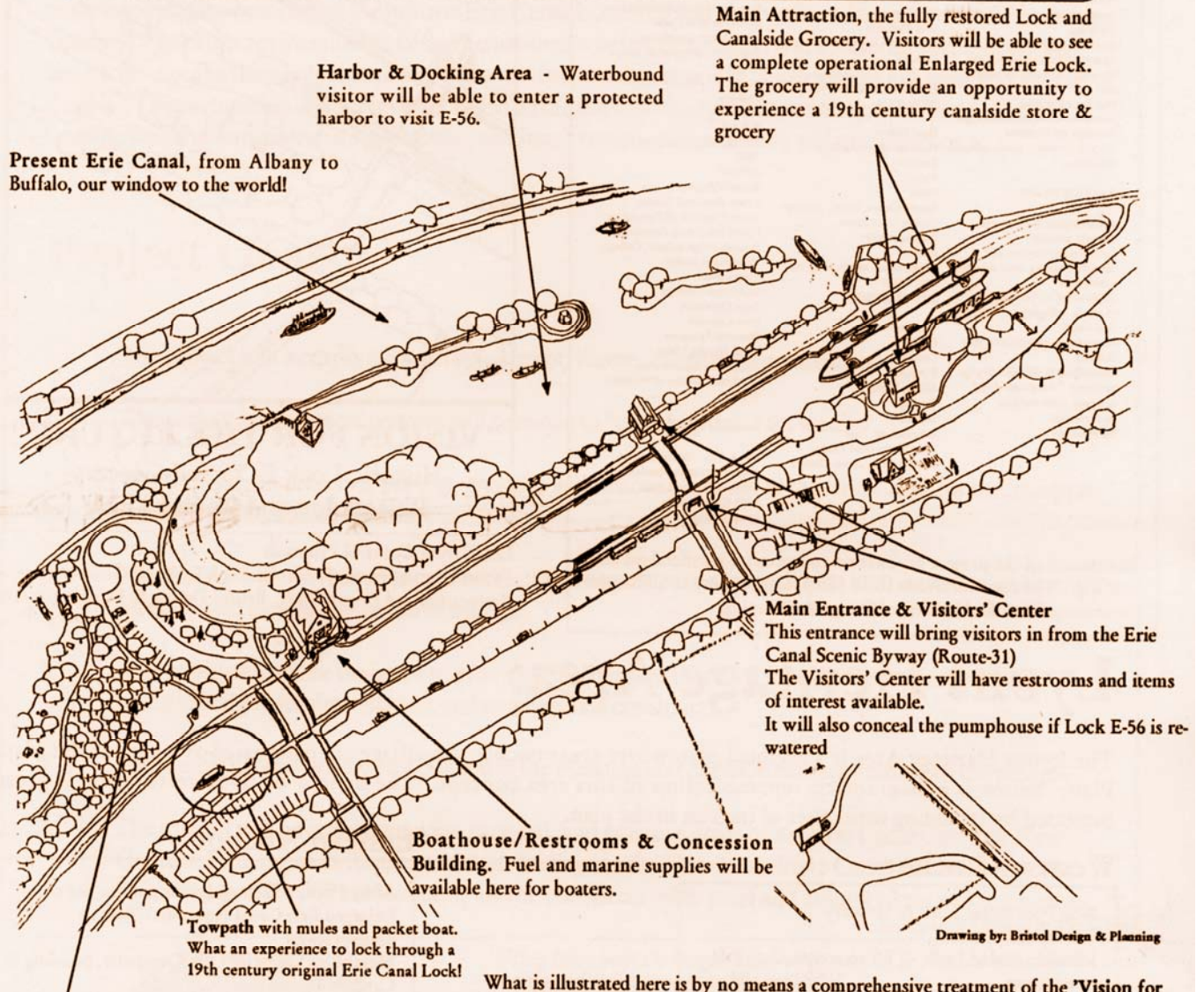
Visitors arriving by automobile, via the Erie Canal Scenic Byway, will be greeted by the E-56 Lock Visitors Center. In front of the Center will be a "low bridge" over a re-watered Enlarged Erie Canal prism.

Illustrations:
From Bristol Design & Planning

"Vision for the Future"

Historic Lock E-56 and Grocery Restoration and Re-use Study

Poorhouse Lock Project Overview



Main Attraction, the fully restored Lock and Canalside Grocery. Visitors will be able to see a complete operational Enlarged Erie Lock. The grocery will provide an opportunity to experience a 19th century canalside store & grocery

Harbor & Docking Area - Waterbound visitor will be able to enter a protected harbor to visit E-56.

Present Erie Canal, from Albany to Buffalo, our window to the world!

Main Entrance & Visitors' Center
This entrance will bring visitors in from the Erie Canal Scenic Byway (Route-31)
The Visitors' Center will have restrooms and items of interest available.
It will also conceal the pumphouse if Lock E-56 is re-watered

Boathouse/Restrooms & Concession Building. Fuel and marine supplies will be available here for boaters.

Towpath with mules and packet boat.
What an experience to lock through a 19th century original Erie Canal Lock!

E-56 Camping Facilities, for those needing a place to spend the night.

Booth for registration and camper information.
Camping area accessible by car and boat with site for tents and campers.

On this "island" will be a restored orchard.
Within easy distance of the camp ground will be the E-56 historical restoration, as well as trails leading to other sites, such as Clinton's Ditch and the Village of Lyons.

What is illustrated here is by no means a comprehensive treatment of the "Vision for the Future" project. The plan also includes detailed design proposals for the re-watering project, the expansion of the project to include Equestrian Center, overflow parking, links to the Village of Lyons, trail development (to include Garnargua Creek) and even speculation of developing an interpretation of the Wayne County Poor House, our lock's namesake.

We at E.R.I.E. encourage everyone to look at the actual masterplan. It will simply amaze you what can be done at this site. The benefits to Lyons and Wayne county will be considerable!

Supporting Document Section

Following are documents simply copied and attached to this report. They were quickly pulled from files personal and from others who were involved in the project nearly ten years ago.

Of special interest are the Bristol Development & Planning projections of site development and associated costs. These, even today, are quite valid. The site's overwhelming importance justifies this expense as it is truly unique.

When completed it will be a "point of destination" for New Yorker's and all American interested in our Erie Canal heritage. From a much more "down to earth" point of view it will enhance the region for economic growth. Industry and families will come here because of the spirit of pride in our canal's heritage.

With the operating locks, school districts from all parts of the state will sponsor field trips to see a truly "living history" exhibit. Lyons will quickly become a house hold word, when referring to the Erie Canal.

Our canal is at a point of transition. Either we begin to take seriously its preservation or we simply lose it all. I recall a statement made during the turbulent debate on whether or not the canal should even be built in 1812. The Council of Revision (5 members) of the New York State Legislature was deadlocked. Two for the canal, two against the canal, one undecided. At the time there was fear and anxiety that war with England was on the horizon and we should spend our money on war preparation. The issue was resolved when the person undecided declared, "... if there be war or a canal, I'm in favor of the canal". This incredible faith started one of the greatest public works projects in history. It built the "Empire State" and started the huge migration to the interior of our nation. Without this essential "internal improvement" it is doubtful our manifest destiny would have happened.

We now have another opportunity, within our canal system, to again take a leap of faith and return to our people this wonderful history, heritage and restoration of the remaining canal infrastructure. It's disappearing quickly, through neglect and modern renewal projects. The E-56 project is an important first step in the reversal of this disturbing trend.

John R. Groves
May 6, 2005

The Last Word - Inspiration!

A week or so ago I had the thrill of visiting the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. It was preserved through funding by the National Park Service. Today it is both a recreational resource and historic interpretation of the nation's canal era.

Our canal can be similar to this project. It can also be different in that much of our canal history finds itself in our New York cities and villages. The C&O appears much more rural. In any case, focused efforts can and will make a difference.



A. Lock 44 at Williamsport. House adjacent to lock is the Locktenders. **B.** Bollman Truss Bridge, *detail*, used as a crossing bridge near Lock 44. **C.** Locktenders House cut into the towpath at Lock 44. **D.** The 1834 Conococheague Aqueduct at Williamsport. **E.** ca. 1920's the C&O in use at the Cushwas' Basin. **F.** Cushawas' Basin today serves as a National Historic Park Visitor's Center.

E.R.I.E.
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