

Measuring An "Historic" Project's Success

Lumber, the Shenendehowa Central School District, the Town of Clifton Park, area small business owners and concerned citizens. In a spirited community service project, this team not only renovated and stabilized the Lock but erected a bridge across one of its chambers, allowing public access to the main structure for the first time since this portion of the canal was closed and drained in 1915.

Hundreds of hours of volunteer time were invested plus a considerable amount of donated materials totaling about \$150,000 in in-kind services. No public money was used for this project. Upon its completion, the project crew was recognized with a GOBY Award for volunteerism by the Stakeholders Regional Volunteer Center, and the Historic Lock 19 Project became the template for the highly successful Saratoga County Community Development Program led by the CSSC, which has resulted in other successful projects such as Ballston Spa's Brookside Museum 1800 Long Room

Renovation and Oral History Project (2014-'15), the completion of the XO Tower second floor in Mechanicville (2016), installation of benches along the trail in Round Lake (2016) and the establishment of four Community Business Alliances in Waterford, Charlton, Round Lake and Schuylerville (2013-'16).

The benefit of these privately-funded and volunteer-driven community efforts was highlighted this Spring when a large section of trail adjacent to Historic Lock 19 was completed by the Town of Clifton Park along the former canal towpath (people can literally walk in the path of "Sal the Mule"). The twin towns of Clifton Park and Halfmoon took advantage of a \$2.1 million grant to upgrade 4.4 miles of trail where all three versions of the Erie Canal (1825, 1842, and 1915) can be

viewed together. Without the work of the volunteers at Historic Lock 19, the new trail would be a very nice improvement that meandered past some old stone relics. Because of the Lock project, the Town of Clifton Park can boast one of the best historic canal sites in the State with easy access from the nearby nature preserve and, by dinghy, from the Mohawk River. This is a bona fide tourist attraction, accessible to boaters and other visitors, and a fitting way to help people "Discover Clifton Park" 175 years after the construction of Historic Lock 19!

For more information visit the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County website at www.southernaratoga.org, or call (518) 371-3763.

Five years ago, Historic Lock 19, located adjacent to the present-day Mohawk River/Erie Canal in Vischer Ferry, was in tough shape. Lost behind a canopy of trees, vines, roots and refuse, the ravages of time were evident. Vegetation growing up through the structure threatened to dislodge hand-laid stone blocks, first constructed during the enlargement of the Canal in 1842. This venerable part of Industrial Revolution history was in grave danger.

Enter the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County (CSSC), with volunteer help from Turner Construction, GE and Momentive Performance Materials, as well as Curtis

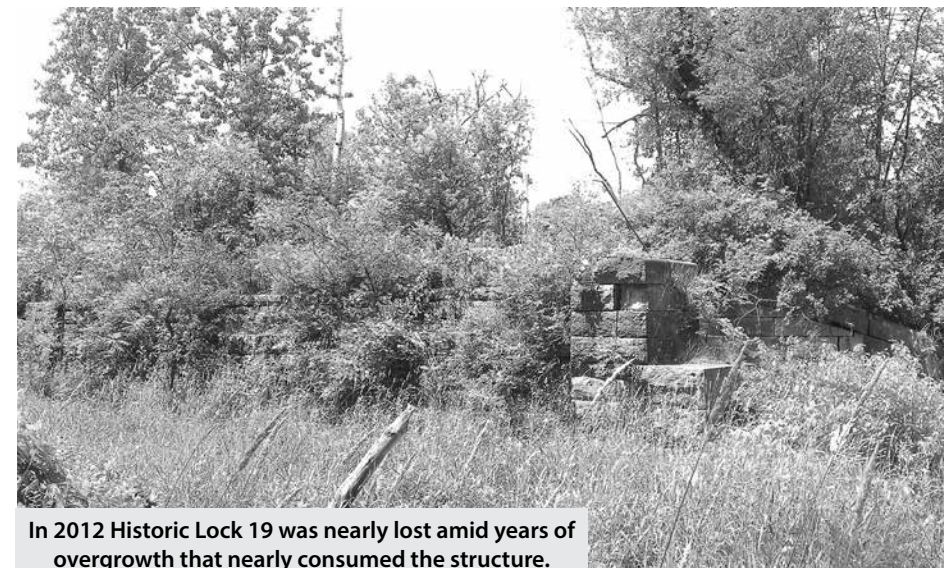


Under an April rainbow 175 years after its construction, Historic Lock 19 is now accessible to tourists along a newly-renovated trail (far right). Wildlife abounds and eagles sometimes soar overhead, a fitting tribute to the canal that helped make America a great industrial power in the 1800s.

by **Pete Bardunias,**
President/CEO, the
Chamber of Southern
Saratoga County



This collage of photos was produced to commemorate the 2012-'13 renovation and bridge construction project that saved Historic Lock 19 and was recognized with a major collaborative volunteerism award. Photo courtesy of www.DaveFeiden.com.



In 2012 Historic Lock 19 was nearly lost amid years of overgrowth that nearly consumed the structure.