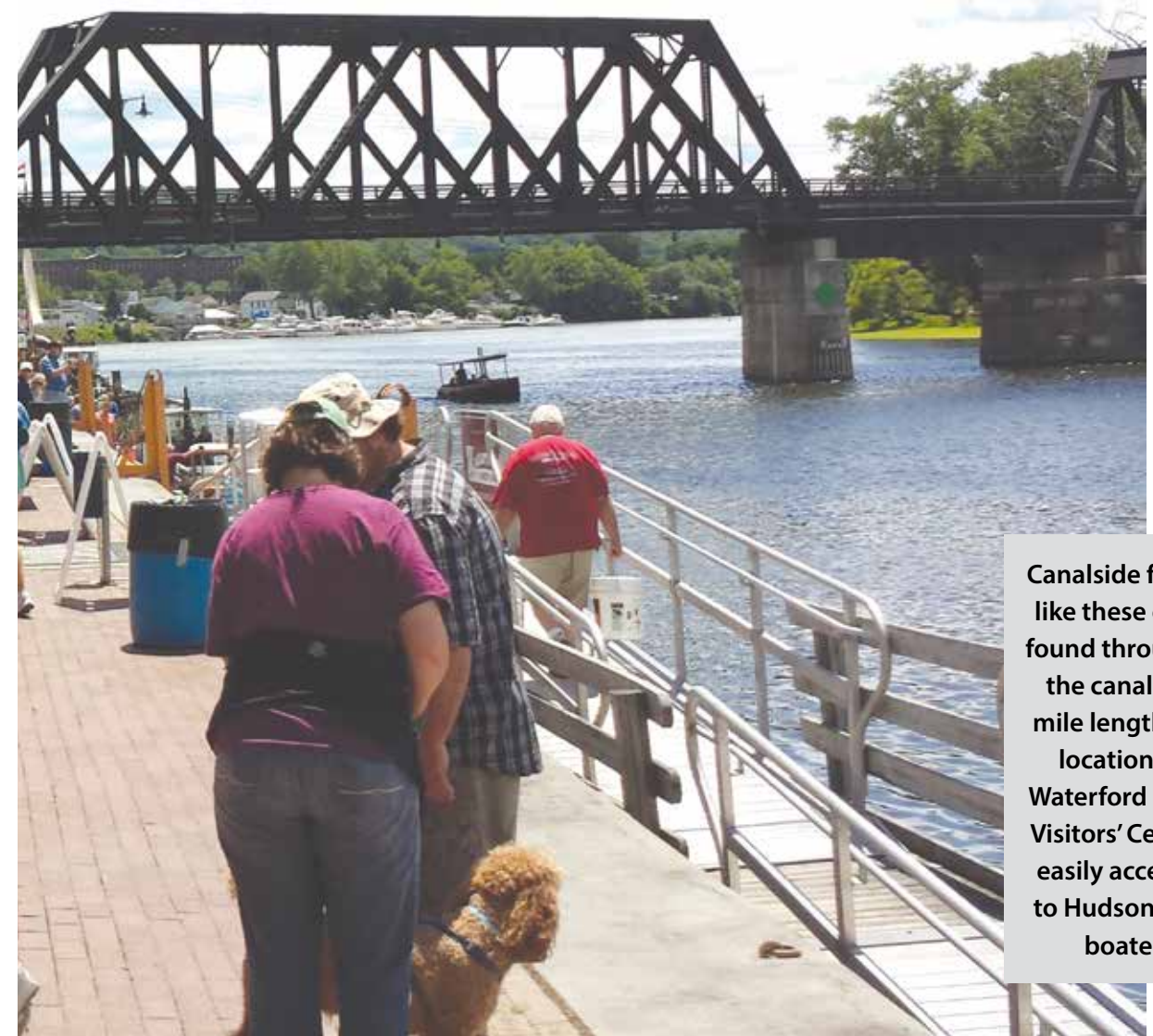




by **Pete Bardunias**,  
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The New York State Canal System has been officially recognized as something any of us who travel its waters know already – it is among the premier historic sites in the United States, of exceptional value and quality that illustrates our nation's heritage. Thanks to a recent act by the National Park System and the Secretary of the Interior, over 450 miles of canal system have now been so recognized. National Historic Landmark status shines a spotlight on the canal corridor as a destination and helps it better compete with other cultural heritage destinations.

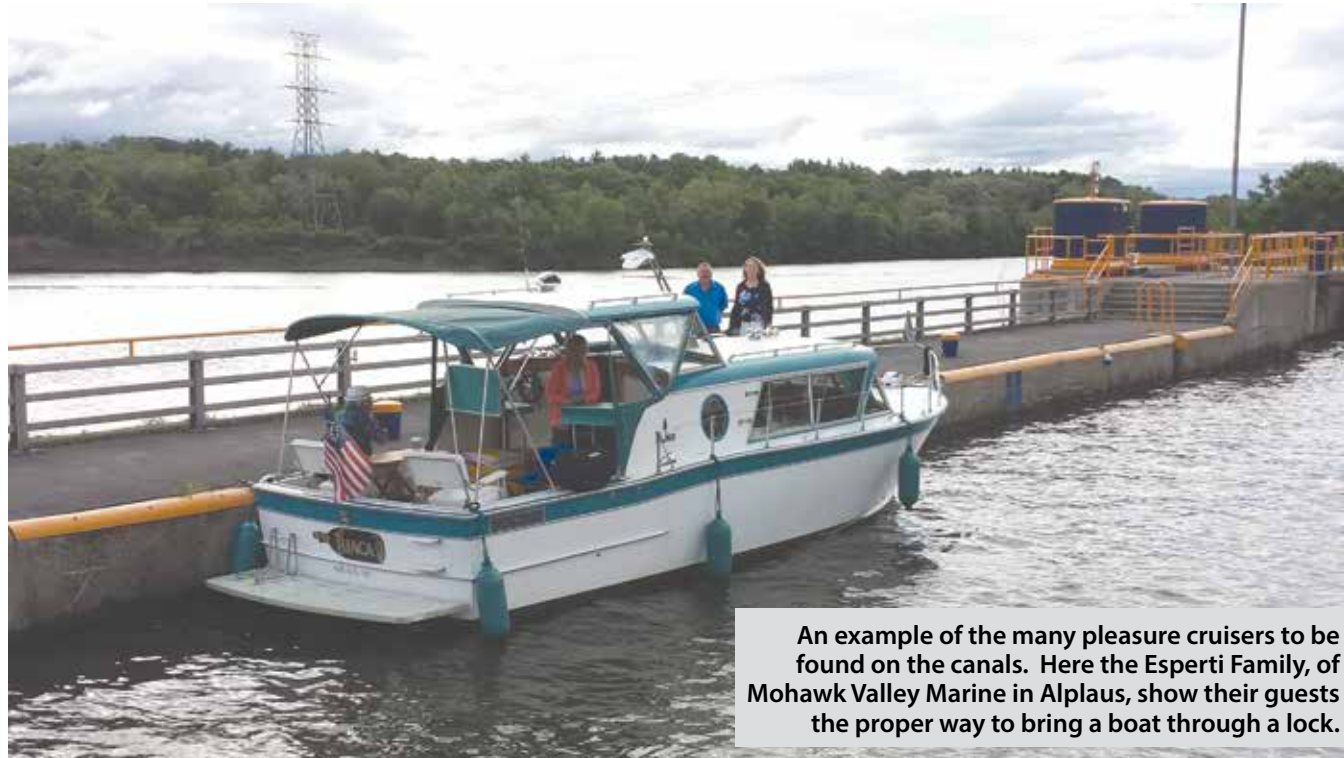
# New York State Canal System Receives National Historic Landmark Designation



Canalside festivals like these can be found throughout the canal's 524 mile length. This location, the Waterford Harbor Visitors' Center, is easily accessible to Hudson Valley boaters.

It makes the waterway especially attractive to cultural heritage travelers who are looking for authentic experiences. Research shows that these travelers tend to spend more and stay longer than other types of travelers. The timing of this announcement was very appropriate given that this is the 200th Anniversary of the start of the canal's construction in 1817. Numerous bicentennial activities and tours will take place in 2017, giving communities the opportunity to capitalize on the canal and visitors who will be

coming here for events this year. "It is easy to become familiar with something that has been part of the landscape for two centuries," says New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian Stratton. "You walk along it, you drive over it, you work and live next to it – and it can become so ever-present that it becomes ordinary, but what we celebrate today is the ultimate validation of what we all know – that this iconic waterway is truly extraordinary." Considerable investment has been made by economic



An example of the many pleasure cruisers to be found on the canals. Here the Esperti Family, of Mohawk Valley Marine in Alplaus, show their guests the proper way to bring a boat through a lock.



This rather unusual looking cruise ship was designed to handle the famous low bridges of the New York State Canal System.



As lock gates open, a wonderful waterway is revealed ahead. Boats share this waterway with wildlife, kayaks, fishermen, and more.

development entities throughout the state in recent years, as Regional Economic Development Councils funded more than a hundred projects totaling millions of dollars in 2016 that will contribute to the canal system and community improvement. Funded projects include events, historic preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, community revitalization, arts, recreation and park projects, trails, and tourism. From a commercial perspective, one might wonder if the new designation and so much emphasis on historic preservation

and recreation might hinder the utilization of the Canal for its originally intended purpose, namely the efficient transportation of finished products, raw materials and people across the state. Assurance has been given that the National Historic Landmark designation carries with it no additional stipulations which would affect commercial marine operation. This is a good thing, considering that the tonnage moved along the Canal System has been growing in recent years.



One of the many commercial tugs owned by the NYS Marine Highway tugboat company, the *Margot* pushes a heavy barge northward on the Champlain Canal. Based in Troy, the NYS Marine Highway carries about 90 percent of the cargo that is shipped on the Canal System today.

Perhaps that is the best legacy of New York State's canals – in the fast paced, high tech world of the 21st Century, the venerable waterway continued mostly as it has since its “modern” re-imagination circa 1915. As Director Stratton puts it, “Much credit for the canal's historical integrity can be attributed to generations of state canal workers who have operated and maintained the system for the past 100 years. The ongoing stewardship of lock and bridge operators, bank walkers, and tug and dredge crews,

engineers and administrators has preserved this nationally significant resource in remarkable condition.” The above information has been adapted from a release by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor ([www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)). For more information on the Canal System visit [www.canals.ny.gov](http://www.canals.ny.gov) or the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County website at [www.southernaratoga.org](http://www.southernaratoga.org).