

3 Opportunities

The Champlain Canal Trail corridor in Saratoga County provides a significant opportunity to capitalize on the region's historic, tourism and economic development potential. The corridor has a rich heritage of canal, military and railroad artifacts and locations, including sections of both the original "old" Champlain Canal and the modern Champlain Canal along the Hudson River. Local communities are actively involved in a variety of initiatives which the trail will help to connect. The opportunities for the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail are summarized as follows:

1. **Economic Development.** Greenways and trails have been documented to have significant economic benefits. Based on the 1998 study "Thinking Green" by the Florida Department of Environmental Conservation, day use trail expenditures range from \$3.97 per day to \$14.88 per day. Typical spending for overnight visitors can range between \$25 and \$125 per day. Key factors include the length of the trail system, duration of stay, location in relation to population centers, and availability of facilities.

Other studies from across the nation show annual average expenditures between \$1.5 million and \$4 million dollars per year along similar trail corridors. In Minnesota, a 1990 study of the 36 mile Root River Trail showed the average visitor traveled 82 miles to reach the trail, stayed 2.5 hours and spent approximately \$10. Before the trail opened in the community of Lansboro, there was only one place to stay overnight. As of May 1994, there were more than a dozen. Local food and drink receipts increased 84% and lodging receipts in the county increased 800% between 1986 and 1992. Similar numbers have been achieved along the 35 mile Pinellas Trail in Florida and the 20 mile Northern Central Rail Trail (NCRT) in Maryland. The NCRT supports an estimated 264 jobs, with visitor spending estimated at \$3.3 million / year and with an annual tax revenue of more than \$300,000. The following table shows a cross-section of data on trail expenditures from seven trails in the U.S.:

TRAIL NAME & LOCATION	LENGTH (Miles)	ANNUAL VISITORS	TOTAL EXPEND. BY USERS	EXPEND. PER VISITOR	PAVEMENT TYPE
Heritage Trail Dubuque, Iowa	26	135,000	\$1,571,400	\$11.64	Compacted Limestone
St. Mark's Trail Tallahassee, Florida	16	170,000	\$2,368,100	\$13.93	Paved
Lafayette/Moraga Trail Berkeley Hills, CA.	7.6	400,000	\$2,008,000	\$5.02	Paved
Little Miami Warren County, OH	27	162,000	\$2,268,000	\$14.00	Paved
Northern Central Rail Trail Baltimore Co., MD.	20	450,000	\$4,027,930	\$8.95	Crushed Stone
Elroy-Sparta Trail Western Wisconsin	32	60,000	\$2,183,432	\$36.39	Crushed Stone
Katy Trail East-West across Missouri	225	250,000	\$3,575,087	\$14.30	Crushed Stone

Source: Schenectady Urban Bike Route Master Plan, Edwards & Kelcey / Trailblazer 2002

The Elroy-Sparta Trail, a 32 mile crushed stone facility in Wisconsin, reported in 1997 that peak season hotel rooms along the trail are booked up to a year in advance. More than half the users surveyed reported annual incomes above \$50,000 and trail related spending exceeds \$2.1 million per year. **“There has been tremendous economic growth as a result of the trail,”** said Sharon Berns, director of the Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce. Businesses supported by trails include campgrounds, motels, coffee shops, bed and breakfasts, bike shops, quick markets, gas stations and restaurants. The benefits of a trail will depend on a variety of factors, but these examples provide a cross-section of success stories which Saratoga County can emulate.

2. **Heritage Tourism.** Travel for the purposes of touring historic and cultural sites is a significant resource in Saratoga County. More than 150,000 visitors come to the Saratoga National Historical Park (“the Battlefield”) each year. The new National Veterans Cemetery, General Schuyler’s house, the Waterford Canal Harbor Visitor’s Center, the Saratoga Apple Farm, the restored Battle of Saratoga Monument, and the Visitor’s Center at Schuyler’s Canal Park are just a few of the trail’s attractions. Additional opportunities include cultural tours of the Italian heritage in Mechanicville, the Hudson River Valley’s transportation history, and interpretation of the Old Champlain Canal. The County’s waterfront border is the junction of New York’s three major heritage corridors – the Hudson River National Heritage Corridor, the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, and the Lakes to Locks Passage All-American Road. All three corridors merge at Waterford within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.



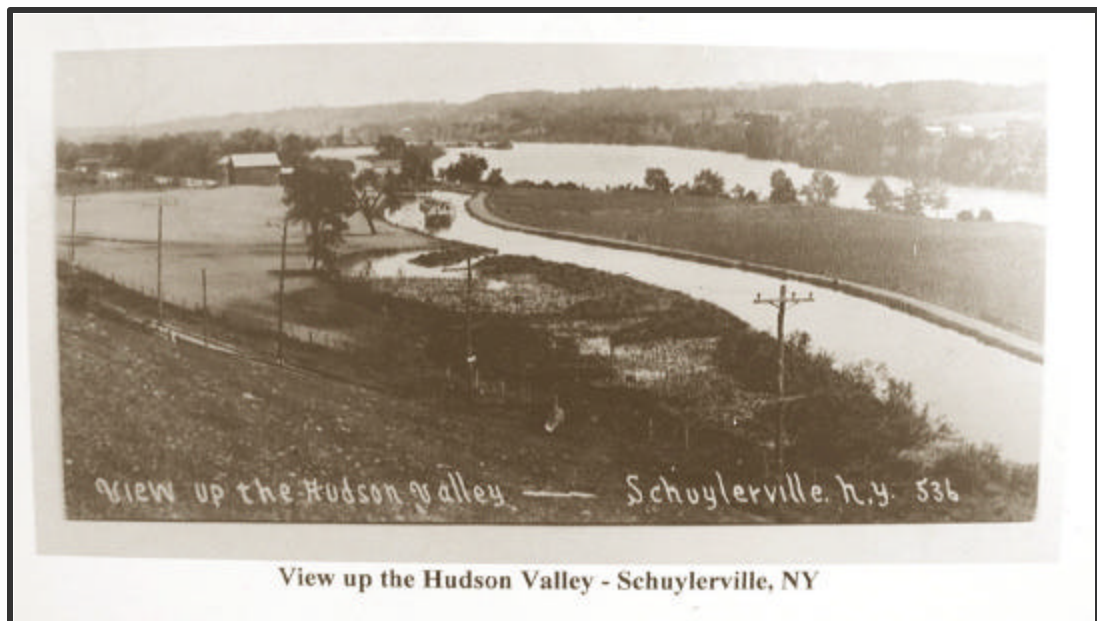
Junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals in Waterford, Saratoga County

The following excerpts from the recent Lakes to Locks Passage All-American Road designation provides an important perspective for the Champlain Canal Trail in the context of heritage tourism in Saratoga County.

“...Lakes to Locks Passage interconnects the story of North America’s first commercial waterway – which has served as a route for migratory birds and native peoples, European explorers, colonial armies, industrial and commercial enterprises and diverse recreational activities – and has built the nations of the United States and Canada. Lakes to Locks Passage, “The Great Northeast Journey,” is your ticket to a unique American experience. Between the Mohawk River in upstate New York and Quebec, Canada flows North America’s first inter-connected waterway that shaped the nation-building

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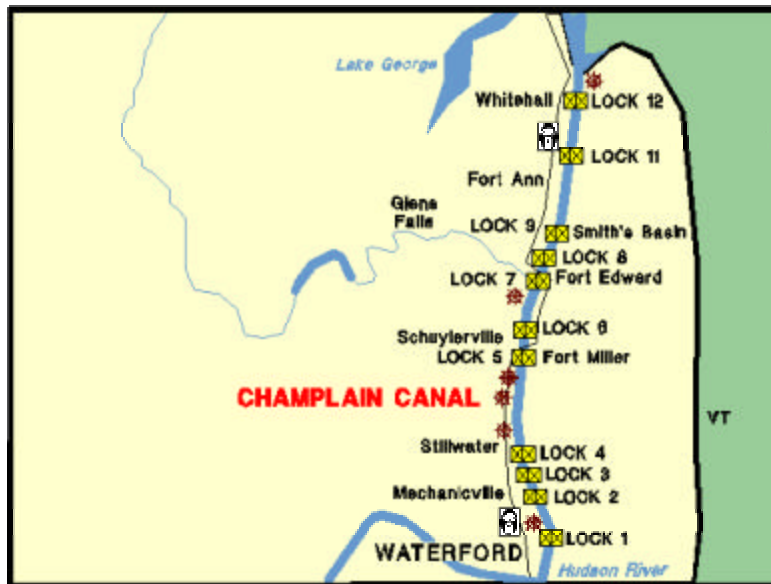
activities of the United States and Canada. By bike, foot, boat or car, Lakes to Locks Passage provides access to diverse historic and recreational sites along 200 miles of the waterway used by migratory animals, explorers, armies, commercial enterprises and now, Byway enthusiasts... "Heritage Tourism" was born in the region we now call Lakes to Locks Passage. The first trips to see our history were made when future American Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison visited the region to escape the heat of Congressional politics in Philadelphia, and see where the battles for freedom were fought. The same historic battlefields and forts that they came to visit in 1791, are open today – Saratoga Battlefield at Stillwater, Schuylerville, Fort Edward, Whitehall, Fort Ticonderoga, Crown Point, and Valcour Island – all offer tours and reenactments. There is no doubt that Lakes to Locks Passage is the world's premiere destination to learn about the nation-building activities that have led to the peace and prosperity found in today's United States and Canada. The story of Lakes to Locks Passage's varied past comes alive in the buildings of our villages and hamlets! A series of "Waypoint Communities" have been designated to "meet and greet" the visitor of the byway. Nearly every one now has a biking/walking tour which allows the visitor to find the wealth of the iron industry written in the flamboyant style of commercial buildings, and appreciate the 19th-century resort atmosphere and architectural details milled from local lumber..."



An historic photo of the Old Champlain Canal in Saratoga County shows both the original "old" canal and the Hudson River, which is the route of the modern Champlain Canal.

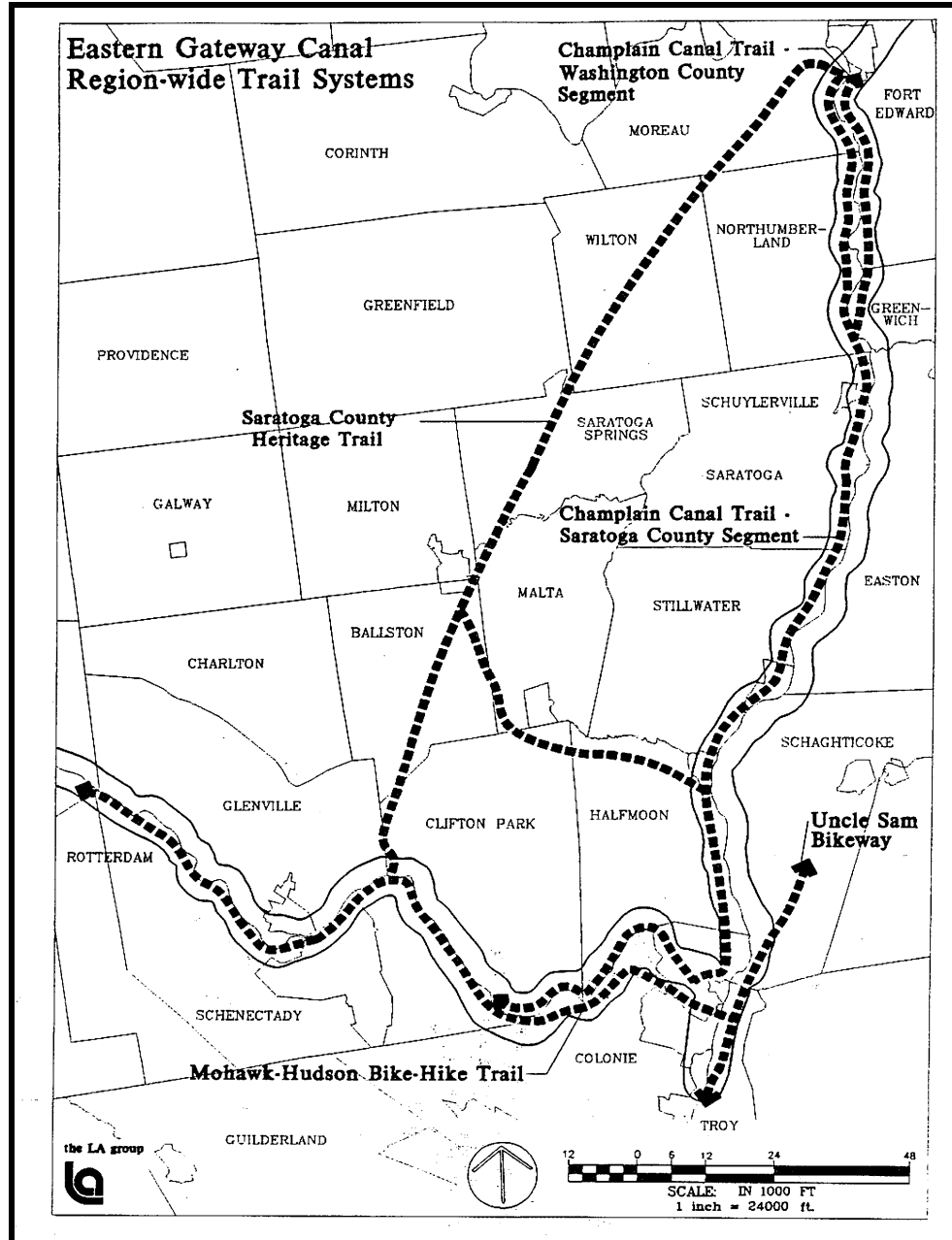
In order for this extraordinary heritage tourism experience to reach its potential, the historic resources of this corridor must be preserved, interpreted and enhanced. The existing sections of the Old Champlain Canal are virtually invisible to modern travelers on Routes 4 and 32. There are currently only a handful of historic markers, and most of these are in locations without roadside turnouts, information kiosks or other visitor amenities. But the potential for eastern Saratoga County to turn these hidden assets into an international heritage tourism destination is significant.

3. **Transportation & Recreation.** Shared-use paths can serve both transportation and recreation purposes. This relationship is similar to the 'transportation' purpose of a road to a ski resort or a beach – the facility is used for travel between destinations, some of which is utilitarian in nature and some of which is for pleasure. Although few trips along the Champlain Canal would likely be bicycle commuters to Albany or Glens Falls, the path will provide for routine transportation between and within the communities of Schuylerville, Stillwater, Mechanicville and Waterford. This will include trips to school, shopping and other utilitarian travel. In addition, the Champlain Canal Trail would connect with the Saratoga County Heritage Trail system along the former D&H Railroad corridor from Mechanicville through Round Lake, Malta and Saratoga Springs.



Map showing locations of Champlain Canal Locks and NY State Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County

At the regional scale and from a tourism / recreation perspective, the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County forms a missing link between existing trail systems in Warren and Albany Counties. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail System and the Warren County / Lake George Bikeway form an extensive off-road network to the north. This system was originally constructed in 1977 with three federal grants totaling over \$640,000. Use counts in 1980 showed more than 2300 trips / week. In 1995, a Warren County follow-up study showed those numbers had more than tripled with total use exceeding 100,400 trips annually. Recently, the Warren County bikeway was extended into downtown Glens Falls, and it is expected that the annual use numbers will continue to increase. (Source: Warren County Bikeway Survey, 1995). A similar study was conducted by Schenectady County in 1998 to evaluate use along the existing Erie Canal / Mohawk-Hudson Trail. That facility was shown to have more than 450,000 visits by bicyclists, runners, skaters and pedestrians. (Source: Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail Analysis of Trail Use, November 1998). With such heavily used facilities located to the immediate north and south of Saratoga County, the potential exists to create a facility with equal or greater use.



Potential Saratoga County trails identified in the 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Master Plan.

4. **Funding.** Federal transportation funding (ISTEA and TEA-21) has provided significant resources for the Canalway Trail. Washington County and NYS Canal Corporation have obtained a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to complete the portion of the Canalway Trail from Ft. Edward to Ft. Ann. That construction is scheduled for 2003/2004. In 2002, the City of Mechanicville applied for similar funding to develop its section of the Champlain Canal Trail. The Village of Schuylerville is developing the trail between Lock 5 and the Schuyler House, and this project will connect with the Bi-County Park proposed by Saratoga and Washington Counties.

The Village of Stillwater has applied to the Empire State Development Corporation for Community Enhancement Facilities Assistance Program (CEFAP) funding to develop a Riverfront Park in the Old Champlain Canal corridor. It is important to note that the current federal legislation (TEA-21) is in the process of being reauthorized by Congress, and the potential exists for the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail to receive some of this new transportation funding. Other state and federal resources are available, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. There are also a variety of potential local public, private and non-profit opportunities to support development of the trail.

5. **Community Support.** The local Saratoga County Heritage Trails Committee has existed since the early 1990's. In 1996, the group published the *Saratoga County Heritage Trails Handbook for Action*. The group has been formally designated as the Saratoga County Bikeway / Greenway Committee by the Board of Supervisors. Local efforts are also underway with active groups in Waterford, Mechanicville, Halfmoon Stillwater and Schuylerville. The National Park Service has played a supportive role and provided technical assistance in developing the *Handbook for Action*. The Saratoga Land Trust acquired an important section of Old Champlain Canal right-of-way in the early 1990's when it was sold by the County as part of a tax auction. The 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan included the Old Champlain Canal trail. Local community master plans, such as the Town of Stillwater Comprehensive Plan, include the trail. The Lakes to Locks Passage project has created significant interest in the local business community, and received national recognition with the designation of the byway as an All-American Road by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

There have been a number of outreach efforts associated with the various initiatives along the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal in Saratoga County. In April, 2002, a public meeting was held in Stillwater to discuss the possibilities for the Old Champlain Canal Trail. The meeting included both supporters and opponents to the project. Key issues included the lack of trails in the community, liability concerns, flood management, economic development and trail management. A summary of the meeting provided by Councilwoman Joanne Winchell stated in part, "...*The purpose was to furnish information and to solicit views from residents. This goal was accomplished. Of the twenty-three residents present, only three families adjacent to the proposed concept spoke in opposition.*"

As part of the development of the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail Concept Plan, another public meeting was held on August 20, 2002 at Olympian Hall in Schuylerville. More than thirty-five people from throughout the region participated. Presentations were made about the New York State Canalway Trail System and the potential for trails in Saratoga County. Breakout groups identified the issues, opportunities and constraints presented in this Concept Plan. At the conclusion of the meeting, a participant (who had initially been perceived as opposing the trail) summarized the meeting by saying, '*This trail is a great idea – but only if we can resolve the issues identified by adjacent landowners.*' Additional meetings were held with property owners in Stillwater, the National Park Service, the New York State Canal Corporation, Lakes to Locks Passage and the Adirondack School. A second public meeting was held at Schuylerville High School on September 24, 2002. Specific constraints identified during the planning process and potential solutions are presented in the following sections.