

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: LAYERS: HERITAGE,
SIGNIFICANCE AND THE COMPLEX
HISTORIC PLACE

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This study uses the Erie Canal Village (ECV), an outdoor heritage museum located in Rome, New York, as a case study. Intended to become an economic development tool for the city, it is now privately owned and threatened by neglect, although several layers of history and heritage are present at the site.

This study also addresses how to approach a complex historic site with varying levels of significance assigned to each historic layer, in order that it receive the recognition and protection needed. Like other layered sites, geography was a factor in the presence of human use of the ECV site for transportation, defense, and then heritage activities. An analytical framework includes the evaluation of heritage and heritage tourism as it relates to the site, where history is both present and presented. Discussion includes the determination of which layer of the site's history matters most. Analysis of current methods of evaluating historic and/or culturally significant places compares current American and Australian systems to determine which approach is more appropriate for a complicated, layered site and provides a

broader application of protection and recognition. Understanding a layered historic place like the ECV will assist other historians and preservationists in coping with similarly complicated sites.

The ECV layer is the only layer of the site that possesses local and state significance, while all of the other layers present at the site possess national levels of significance. I conclude that this layer, if protected and properly maintained, will continue to provide protection to the remaining historical layers present at the site. The presence of the village buildings, in effect, protects the historic layers at ground level, as well as the site's undiscovered archeological resources.

Key Words:

History, Heritage, Significance, Layer, Layers, Canals, Erie Canal, Transportation, Tourism, Archeology

LAYERS:
HERITAGE, SIGNIFICANCE AND THE COMPLEX HISTORIC
PLACE

Cabryn Lynn Gurdo

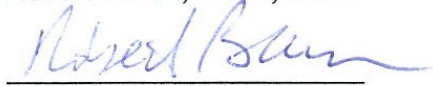
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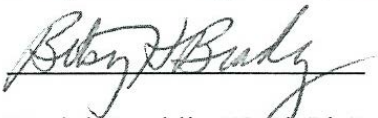
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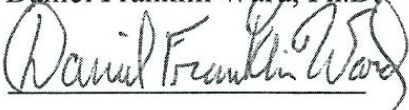
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For the Citizens of Rome, New York

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I wish to thank all of the people who have supported me through the process of creating this treatise and completing this degree. My hope is that I remember to mention everyone, but if I don't, please accept my apologies in advance.

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Thanks to Rome Investigators of the Paranormal and the Fort Bull Research Group for holding a fundraising paranormal investigation of Fort Bull/Fort Wood Creek in conjunction with the Rome Historical Society in September of 2016. This event brought me back to the ECV for the first time in decades and drew me into the sad story of the ECV. As a direct result of that event, I was inspired to construct this treatise.

To those who dedicated significant portions of their lives to planning for, interpreting, and/or caring for the ECV—Mary Reynolds, Mike Milewski and Al Pallas—your dedication and contributions to this important heritage place truly meant something. Thank you so much for sharing your stories with me.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Significant historical events have a tendency to occur in places that are most frequented by human activity. Inevitably, these places continue to be utilized after these events have occurred. When geographical or other constraints direct travel to particular areas of land, the possibility that subsequent historical events will occur near or on the same site increase. The possibility that multiple events or associations can come to be assigned to the same piece of land presents a problem to historians and preservationists: how do we recognize each event or association in this place? Evaluating these complex places and the layers of history that have accumulated upon them creates an opportunity for discussion about our heritage.

In the field of historic preservation, it is common to discuss the period of significance of a particular place, whether it is a building or simply a parcel of land. When periods of significance overlap, established institutions or organizations are often faced with making a determination in regards to which period to restore a building or site to. In essence, these decisions make the ultimate statement: which periods of this place's history matters most? This thesis will seek to answer this question.

In the past, advantageously located sites were reused as needed with little, if any, regard for the events known to have transpired at that site. Today, development pressures routinely unearth artifacts and other evidence of the past in the course of progress and growth. When this happens during a federal undertaking, the Section 106 process is

triggered and the project is reviewed.¹ Section 106 review is a process by which federal agencies address whether their undertakings cause adverse effects to historic resources. State-level regulations also exist to provide oversight to non-federal projects. This practice addresses all historic properties in the project area listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places, or determined to be eligible for such listing. For non-federal, non-state, or private projects, the site is frequently at the mercy of the developer who has the ability to choose whether or not to halt the work if a resource is discovered.

The historical significance of a site may be uncovered as a result of development or other invasive construction activity. In some places, the nearly intact state of historic features has only been possible due to the absence of these types of activities. When threatened, the possibility of these places continuing to exist are placed at great risk. Recognizing their importance in terms of history and heritage are critical in ensuring their survival into the future.

The Location of the Erie Canal Village

The Erie Canal Village (ECV) site in Rome, New York is one of these complicated, layered sites. The history of Rome, New York is centered on its geographical features, which condensed human activity and transportation into a narrow area. The western end of this area is now home to the ECV in addition to several Erie Canal features, a French and Indian War-era fort, and a Native American worksite. The site where the ECV is located is on the west side of the city of Rome. The Erie Canal Village was a heritage village created in the 1960s through the 1980s, using relocated but

¹ “Section 106 Regulations Summary,” Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. Last accessed May 12 2018. <http://www.achp.gov/106summary.html>.

authentic wooden structures from the Greater Erie Canal corridor in the Mohawk Valley region of Upstate New York. Hopes for the Erie Canal Village were that it would become a great outdoor museum heritage tourism attraction,² in conjunction with the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix as a National Monument, on the other side of the city of Rome. No village or similar settlement ever existed on the ECV site prior to the relocation of the buildings to that site. While Fort Stanwix had been declared a National Monument decades earlier, the Bicentennial was an inspiration for the construction for both of these projects.

The creation of a new National Monument, the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix of Revolutionary War significance, was enabled by the urban renewal movement. Through eminent domain proceedings, the city of Rome obtained the land needed for the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix. The land was then donated to the National Park Service for the reconstruction. Rome lost nearly its entire downtown as urban renewal wiped out dozens of structures for the reconstruction. Urban renewal as it is commonly recognized also occurred on a large scale adjacent to the site of this new National Monument. Rome had grown and developed since the 18th century, and became roughly centered on the site of Fort Stanwix. For decades, Rome's tagline was "The City of American History." Two "aggressive" urban renewal projects in addition to the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix erased most of Rome's historic downtown and commercial buildings, and the city's sense of identity was heavily compromised as a result of this loss.³ The attachment of citizens

² The term "heritage tourism" is used commonly today, though documents reviewed for this study usually referred to the ECV and FOST reconstruction as activities to encourage "history tourism" in Rome.

³ Virginia B. Kelly, et al., *The History of Oneida County*, (Oneida County, New York: C.L. Hutson Co., Inc., 1977), 233.

to their historic buildings and the heritage represented in their city Center was deeply emotional. Some of that emotional connection shifted to the Erie Canal Village.

Reconstructed Fort Stanwix, National Monument (commonly referred to as FOST) is operated by the National Park Service. The Erie Canal Village struggled for decades under city ownership as its visitation numbers did not meet expectations. It never made the forecasted revenues that were proposed when it was created. The ECV lost money for all but one of the years it was in operation, still operating at a loss thereafter. It was sold by the city of Rome to a private developer in 2002. The ECV has not been open to the public for more than two years.

The site chosen to be the location for the Erie Canal Village was determined in the 1960s by the Historic Rome Development Authority (HRDA). The site originally planned for the Erie Canal Village was located south of the city, near the place where the Erie Canal's ceremonial groundbreaking occurred on July 4, 1817.⁴ Ultimately, the Erie Canal Village would be located on a different parcel further to the west where the first contract, or working construction, of the Erie Canal took place. This site also possessed two abandoned versions of the Erie Canal: Clinton's Ditch, circa 1817, and the Enlarged Erie Canal of about 1835. The Barge Canal took a different route in the early 20th century, leaving these early canals to obsolescence and ultimately, an opportunity to preserve them.

The site is also adjacent to the remains of two French and Indian War forts: Fort Bull, which was destroyed by the French in March of 1756, and Fort Wood Creek, built in the summer of 1756 to replace Fort Bull. These forts were located at the western end of

⁴ Albert Pallas (former member of Historic Rome Development Authority), in discussion with the author, May 10 2018.

the Oneida Carrying Place, or the Oneida Carry, an approximately four-mile portage that allowed people and supplies to be shipped from the Mohawk River to Oneida Lake, and ultimately, locations such as Oswego and Lake Ontario. This route was of crucial importance during the French and Indian as well as the Revolutionary Wars. It was also an important trade route. Fort Wood Creek was built with earthworks that were minimally disturbed by two centuries of farming activity. Owned by the Rome Historical Society, Fort Wood Creek has been nominated to the State Register of Historic Places. Fort Bull did not have earthworks, and its location is believed to be in the immediate vicinity of Fort Wood Creek. Its exact location is yet to be determined, but could possibly be located on the Erie Canal Village property.

The Erie Canal Village is located within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC), part of which—the Barge Canal—was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark in 2016.

The National Historic Landmark designation includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Direct successors of canals built during the 1820s, these waterways were enlarged to their current dimensions between 1905 and 1918. They remain in service today passing commercial and pleasure vessels between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes....450 miles of navigation channels and 552 contributing structures and buildings that operate today largely as they did when the system went into operation in 1918. The NYS Canal System's navigation channels, locks, lift bridges, dams, power houses, and maintenance shops together represent a significant, distinctive, and exceptional entity.⁵

While the ECV is not open to the public, it is still indicated on a map of the ECNHC. The same map, however, only marks the location of the Ceremonial first digging of the Erie

⁵ “Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor: National Historic Landmark,” Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Last accessed May 12 2018, <https://eriecanalway.org/resources/NHL>.

Canal. It does not show the site of the First Contract, which is at the site of the ECV.

Portions of both the Original Erie Canal or Clinton's Ditch, circa 1817, and the Enlarged Erie Canal, circa 1830s, are extant and visible at the ECV.

The current owner of the Erie Canal Village has not maintained the property, nor has he conformed to the terms of the sale from the city. An illegal archeological dig took place in 2015 on the Erie Canal Village property in direct violation of the covenant that was part of the sale of the Erie Canal Village to the current owner. The owner has left the Erie Canal Village without maintenance, and it has fallen into near-ruin. Many of its buildings have been condemned. The city has the legal opportunity to act on a reversion clause in the sale deed and can regain ownership of the entire property, but it has not done so. The owner's motives for acquiring and possessing the property are unclear, and it has become apparent that the preservation and continuation of the Erie Canal Village are not a priority. Its future is uncertain, but almost surely bleak.

The plight of the Erie Canal Village has generated the key factors that are analyzed in this thesis. The aspiration is that the analytical process and conclusions reached are that they be of use in the saving of the Erie Canal Village before it has been lost, as well as to other similarly-layered historical places. This treatise aims to discuss the interaction of the historical layers of the site, with the goal of making a determination as to which layer is selected as a means to best preserve the site, or best able to save as many historical resources as possible. Does the unknown but nearly-certain location of a lost French and Indian War fort, with its associated mass grave, provide the best argument for the preservation of the site? The existence of the first two versions of the Erie Canal as they remain at the Erie Canal Village site is uncommon, as subsequent

versions of the Canal tended to simply expand the extant canal as it was enlarged. Do Clinton's Ditch and the Enlarged Erie Canal give enough significance to encourage the city to act, or for someone else to step up and intervene? The Erie Canal Village itself, an outdoor museum and heritage tourist attraction, is likely the only reason the two canal sections are still in existence today. Does the Erie Canal Village, as an assembled heritage place, deserve to be considered as the reason to protect the site? It will be argued that the preservation of the Erie Canal Village, in effect, provides protection to the canal sections as well as the potential, yet undiscovered location of Fort Bull. As long as the existing buildings are left above the surface and no new structures are added, the earth will not be excavated. In this way, the canals will still exist as they do today, and the archeological evidence of Fort Bull and its associated graves will remain undisturbed. The question arises: is the Erie Canal Village significant enough to be the reason the site is preserved? If it is not, then which other layer of this complex parcel of land is?

Statement of Hypothesis

This treatise argues that when a multi-layered historic site is threatened, the interpretation of one or more layers of that site have the potential to save the site. The prioritization of significance of history, heritage, or both may be all that is needed to preserve this threatened site. Heritage is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as "features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings that were created in the past and still have historical importance."⁶ An intangible concept,

⁶ "Heritage Meaning," Cambridge Dictionary, Last accessed November 13 2017, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heritage>.<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heritage>.

heritage is how we make the past relatable to us today. Heritage is essentially the process of the construction of the past in the present time. The ultimate question, then, is how to determine which layers or resources are capable of assigning and recognizing the most significant aspect (or aspects) of the site. Can one or more layers resonate with the public sufficiently so that action is taken to preserve the entire site? This treatise will discuss this hypothesis using the Erie Canal Village site in Rome, New York as a case study. The discussion will be presented in a manner that allows for its conclusions to be of use for other multi-layered historic places.

The topic of this thesis is to present an analytical framework for addressing a multi-layered historical site as the means to the end of protecting its historical resources. Preserving a specific layer or layers of the historic site may be enabled by determining which layer should be used as the argument for the preservation of the entire site. This treatise, while addressing the hypothesis that it can be determined that one or more layers of history can be used effectively to argue for the preservation of a layered historic site, will use the example of the Erie Canal Village site in Rome, an artificially assembled 20th century outdoor museum.

Theoretical Questions and Assumptions

How can we best protect historic sites that are privately owned, under pressure of development or other serious threats? If the historic site has one significant event or association that can be used to assign a value to the site, that significance can be used for the argument concerning the need for preservation of the site. Given the passage of time and changing attitudes towards a particular place, multiple historic events and

associations have the potential to become layered upon the same site, decades or even centuries apart. When a site is complicated with multiple layers of historic significance (Fig. 1), it may be a challenge to determine which of those layers should be recognized. Preservation and interpretation may be limited to a single layer of significance, or could address several resources and layers. When that same site is directly threatened, then, which period of the site's history is chosen as an argument for its preservation? Can more than one layer of history be called upon to demonstrate the need to save the place? If only a single aspect of a site's layered history is illuminated in hopes of saving that place, a critical question arises. Which layer of history can be used to argue for the preservation of a multi-layered, historical place? How can we choose among pieces of our history?

There is a critical relationship between the past and present with heritage places. Heritage work seeks to connect the past in a way that is meaningful to visitors experiencing that past in the present. The ECV is a heritage place for the residents and visitors who spent time experiencing history at the site. The history that is present in a layered site like the ECV may not be the most obvious feature of the site. For this reason, the saving of a site based on solely on its historic significance or its heritage value may not be the reason that the site is able to survive into the future. Do changing interests, values, or attitudes towards a heritage place change when it is no longer accessible to the public?

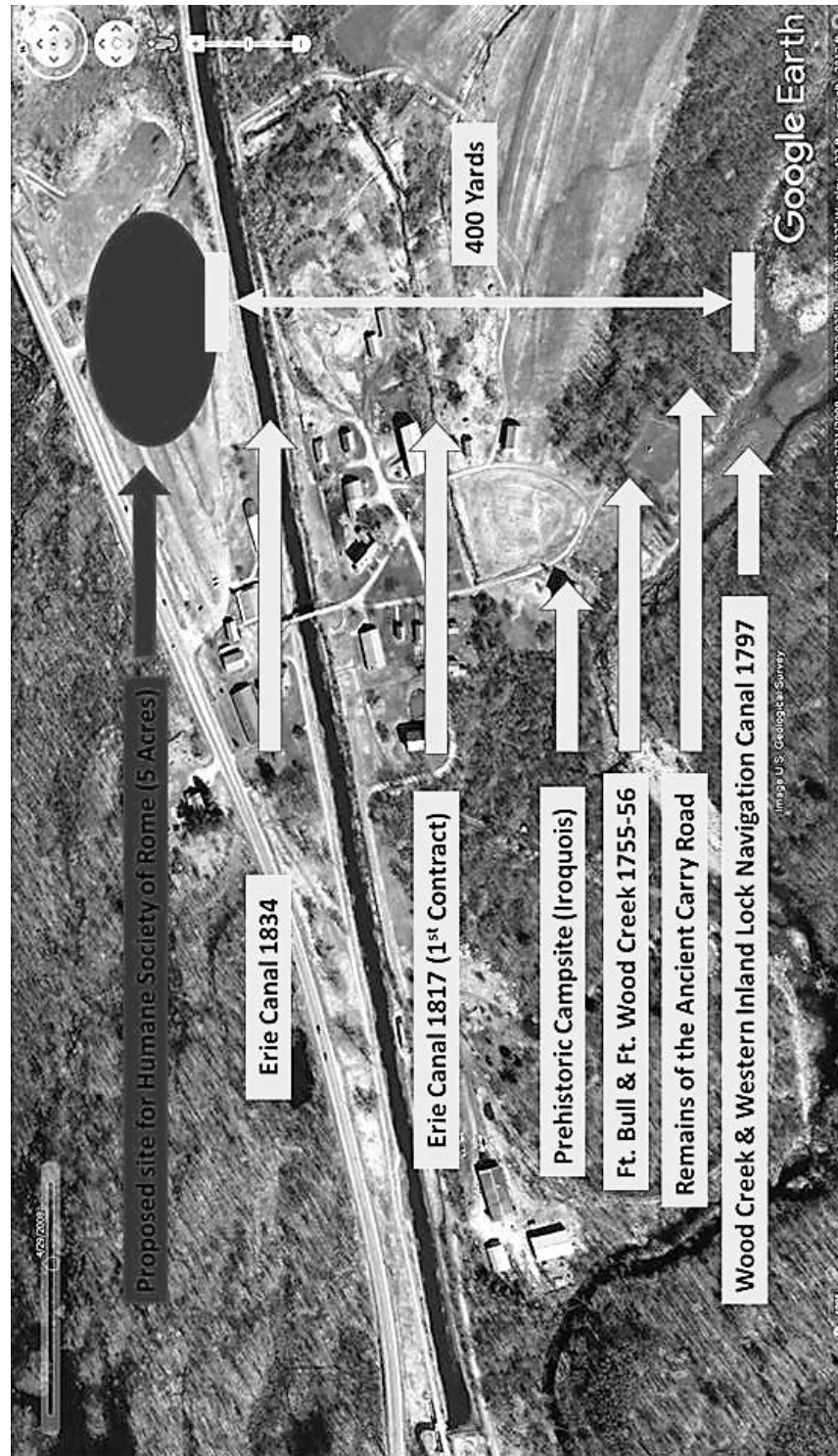


Figure 1: Labeled Google Earth Map of the Erie Canal Village site with proposed Humane Society of Rome location indicated. Image oriented with north at the top. [Source; Arthur L. Simmons III, 2017].

Overview of the Treatise

An introductory chapter will provide an overview of the current situation at the Erie Canal Village site. This chapter will briefly discuss the layers of history present at the site and how they currently interact with one another. Discussion will include the hypothesis of the treatise and the assumptions currently held at the beginning of the development of the thesis. Finally, this chapter will provide an overview of the entire treatise.

The second chapter will examine the layers of history present at the Erie Canal Village site in terms of each layer's potential to provide protection for the entire site. Detailed descriptions of each layer, the proximity of each resource to one another, and the specific threats to each will be discussed. Questions to be answered include: which layers of history are present at the site? Are they conflicting with one another? If so, how?

A subsection of this chapter will examine the "values" of each resource present at the multi-layered historical site. Which layer at the site possesses the highest level of significance? The main resources on the site will be evaluated in terms of local, state, and national significance – which in fact may not be the most critical factor in provoking action. Which layers are the most well-known, or will draw the most attention from the public and local leaders? These are two different types of values. Which have a better chance of receiving funding? Which have the best potential to protect the site? The determination of values will rely on the values assigned to the specific resources present within or upon the site.

The value of a site's multiple layers will be analyzed through discussion of two criteria: those of the National Register of Historic Places and the Australia ICOMOS

Burra Charter, 2013. The comparison and contrast between these criteria will address concerns regarding integrity, as relocated buildings and sites that are not in situ are not easily categorized. For layers that have been altered by the passage of time at the site, changes to integrity may reflect changes in cultural values. Such changes in values have the potential to harm or to help when it comes to the protection or formal recognition of particular layers at the site and their significance.

The third chapter will discuss heritage and heritage tourism as it relates to the Erie Canal Village site. How does heritage, an intangible concept, factor into multi-layered historical places? Can the heritage associated with an artificially-assembled site compete with the layers of authentic, physically-represented historical events that may have occurred on the same site? Can layers of history and heritage co-exist? A heritage site such as the Erie Canal Village opens a discussion between history and authenticity, while simultaneously engaging the public who visit the site.

This chapter will discuss the prioritization of history over heritage, heritage over history, or even examine if there is as much difference as usually assumed. What does it mean when one is chosen over another? This chapter will discuss the need to reconcile these concepts, as making a decision to save one layer of the site may mean that another layer can no longer exist. Heritage, then, is linked to the history of the site, and yet may be set up to be at odds with the site's purely historical value.

The fourth chapter will focus on the implications of choosing one layer of history over the others. If one layer is chosen that conflicts with the other layers, does its preservation have the potential to damage the others? When or if is this an acceptable solution, what is the process by which the conflicting layers are removed or concealed?

Further, there is the possibility that multiple layers of history may be interpreted with consideration to continuity and change, without competition among these layers. The mitigation of potential harm to adjacently-layered historical resources is of utmost concern, particularly if a single layer is determined to be the sole resource to be celebrated and recognized. Consideration of future reversals in this major decision may impact the way in which other layers are covered or left unaddressed.

A fifth chapter will discuss the conclusions reached as a result of the thesis. It is hoped that this project will determine which layer or layers of history present at the Erie Canal Village site can be determined to have the most value or historic significance. The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute to other complicated historic places facing similar problems with multiple layers of significance by highlighting various factors to consider. Additionally, the consideration of heritage, primarily in terms of an outdoor history museum like the ECV, collective memory, and the cultural associations between the public and their valued places will be discussed. It is the goal of this treatise to offer recommendations that will provide the best possible chance for the protection and interpretation of the entire complicated historic site. Recommendations for further research will be discussed.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL LAYERS AT THE ERIE CANAL VILLAGE

The Oneida Carrying Place

The city of Rome is located on a plateau with a river to its east, a small creek to its west and a swampy area to its south. It developed at this location due to its geographical importance. A portage, used for thousands of years by Native Americans, was also used after the arrival of Europeans in America.⁷ Small vessels could be removed from one body of water and carried over the portage to be placed back into the water on the other side. The Mohawk River, entering Rome from the north, turns eastward and flows to the Hudson River and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean. Wood Creek, a shallow, torturous stream, also enters Rome from the north. It then turns west and connects to Oneida Lake. From Oneida Lake, the Oswego River links to Lake Ontario and the other Great Lakes.⁸

The portage between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek, was called the Oneida Carrying Place, or the Oneida Carry. Varying in length from about two and three-quarters to four miles, depending on the level of the Mohawk River, the Oneida Carrying Place was the one interruption in the only east-west water route located between the St. Lawrence River and the Carolinas. With the arrival of European settlers in the area in the 18th century, this portage became a crucial trade route for the movement of furs and other

⁷ Robert M. Lake, *Prehistoric Rome and Romans*, (Rome Historical Society, 1970), 31.

⁸ W.W. Canfield and J.E. Clark, *Things worth knowing about Oneida County*, (Utica, New York: Thomas J. Griffiths, 1909), 35.

goods.⁹ The Carrying Place was a strategic location during the French and Indian War. In this way, the Oneida Carrying Place across what is now the city of Rome set the stage for the area's importance as a transportation corridor.

The Strategic Importance of the Oneida Carrying Place

The strategic importance of the Oneida Carrying Place was most recognized during the Colonial years. As the French had control of the St. Lawrence River, the British realized the need to protect the portage for their westernmost posts such as Oswego. Small oak boats, called batteau, were used to transport people, ammunition, tools, supplies and whatever could not be made on site. In 1755, Captain William Williams decided that two forts should be built at the Oneida Carrying Place.¹⁰ At the eastern end of the Carry, the Mohawk River turns from its southward path to flow towards the east. There were two potential "landing" points where, depending on water level, the batteau would need to be pulled from the Mohawk River onto land and portaged to Wood Creek. Fort Williams was constructed in a pinwheel shape at the eastern end of the Carry, near the location of the Upper Landing. At the western end of the Carry, Wood Creek became navigable. It was here that Fort Bull was constructed. As opposed to a traditional fort, Fort Bull was a small collection of storehouses surrounded by a star-shaped palisade that was approximately 15 to 18 feet tall. There were no bastions, cannon, or port holes that could be used for defense.¹¹ Goods would be taken

⁹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰ Frederick A. Rahmer. *Dash to Frontenac*, (Holland Patent, New York: Steffen Publishing, 1973), 10.

¹¹ William Johnson to William Shirley, (William Johnson Papers: Volume 9, Apr. 3 1756), 414-416.

from the water at either the Upper or Lower Landing points, then moved over the Carry Road—which was the path across the Oneida Carrying Place, as seen in Fig. 2—from Fort Williams to Fort Bull. Goods would be unloaded from the cart or wagon they had been portaged in, and stored until it was time to move the batteaux westward on Wood Creek.



Figure 2: The path of the Carry Road can still be seen today, as evidenced in this photograph. [Source; Arthur L. Simmons III, 2017].

French and Indian War

During the French and Indian War, protecting the Carry was critically important for the British to maintain supply lines for forts such as Oswego. Built in 1755, Fort Bull was located somewhere on what is now the grounds of the Erie Canal Village. During the French and Indian War, under the command of an officer named Gaspard Joseph Chaussegros de Lery, the French attacked and destroyed Fort Bull on March 27, 1756. Its exact location, as well as that of the grave containing the bodies of about thirty victims of the massacre, is unknown but its presence has been noted.¹² De Lery's recollection of the attack appears to have placed the location of Fort Bull on what is currently the property of the ECV.¹³

As de Lery and his men neared Fort Bull on the morning of March 27 1756, they encountered a few British men on the Carry Road who happened to be walking between the forts. The captured men revealed that supplies were being prepared at Fort Bull and about to be sent out to Oswego. Having obtained this information, de Lery chose to attack Fort Bull before dawn.¹⁴ In the early morning Fort Bull was attacked by the French and their Native American allies. A few people were taken prisoner, but most were killed. Those who did not lose their lives during the attack would likely have been killed by the resulting explosion from the ignition of the Fort's powder magazine. The French decided not to attack Fort Williams after all, and immediately returned north to Lake Ontario with

¹² *New York State Museum Bulletin*, Nos 237-238, (Sept-Oct 1920), 636.

¹³ Gilbert Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull: The de Lery Expedition against Oneida Carry. 1756*. (Providence, RI: Battlefield Archeology Press, 1971), 78-79.

¹⁴ Canfield and Clark, *Things worth knowing about Oneida County*, 45-46.

the prisoners taken on the Carry Road and during the attack on Fort Bull.¹⁵ When Sir William Johnson arrived at the scene from Fort Williams as he passed through the area a short time after the attack, he saw the destruction and noted that 26 bodies, estimating the number of fatalities to have been about 60.¹⁶ The exact location of the grave of these thirty or so victims, while nearby, is not known. Based on research conducted in the 1960s, at least one historian believed that the site of Fort Bull was on the property that would later become part of the Erie Canal Village.

Following the loss of Fort Bull, the British constructed a new fort at the western end of the Carry Road. The new fort was named Fort Wood Creek and was completed by August of 1756.¹⁷ Fort Wood Creek was more heavily fortified, built with earthworks that are still visible to this day. Two additional forts were also constructed along the Oneida Carrying Place: Fort Craven near the Upper Landing, and Fort Newport placed between Fort Wood Creek and Fort Craven on Wood Creek, which flowed south into the Oneida Carrying Place. By the end of August, 1756, these four British forts were nearly completed along the Carry. Wood Creek was cleared of obstructions and fallen trees to facilitate transportation.¹⁸

¹⁵ Robert Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative of the Many Dangers and Sufferings as well as the Wonderful Deliverances of Robert Eastburn, during his late Captivity among the Indians*. (Philadelphia: William Dunlap, 1758), 11.

¹⁶ William Johnson to William Shirley, (William Johnson Papers: Volume 9, Apr. 3 1756), 414-416.

¹⁷ There is some confusion with the name of the new fort, some accounts refer to it as Fort Eagle while others it as Fort Wood Creek. It is most commonly referred to as Fort Wood Creek. Fort Wood Creek is located adjacent to the Erie Canal Village property, but is currently owned by the Rome Historical Society. Its history is directly related to that of the Erie Canal Village site, but it is not currently facing the same threats as the other elements of the site. Its history is explained here to complete the story of the military importance of the Erie Canal Village site.

¹⁸ Canfield and Clark, *Things worth knowing about Oneida County*, 37-38.

On August 31 1756, based on reports that the French were rapidly approaching with thousands of troops, the order was given by General Daniel Webb to destroy all of the forts and supplies located along the Carry so that they would not fall into the enemy's hands (Fig.3). Wood Creek, which had just been cleared, was ordered to be intentionally obstructed to slow down advancing French troops.¹⁹ Fort Wood Creek had barely been completed, and Forts Craven and Newport were not yet finished, but the order was given and they were all burned by the men who had just built them. The Oneida Carrying Place was abandoned by the British. The French never came.

As the Oneida Carrying Place still needed to be protected, in 1758, the British began to construct a new fortification. This new project, Fort Stanwix, was completed in 1762. It would later be rebuilt in 1777, eventually renamed Fort Schuyler, and played a prominent role in the American Revolution. The Americans at Fort Stanwix withstood a 21-day siege by the British under the command of Gen. Barry St. Leger. According to the National Park Service, this "successful defense of the fort helped bring about the American victories at Saratoga, which was a turning point of the American Revolution. The unity shown by the different defenders of Fort Stanwix helped to create the United States."²⁰ A second reconstruction of Fort Stanwix as a National Monument took place in the 1960s, the impacts of which continue to be felt to this day.

¹⁹ Rahmer. *Dash to Frontenac*, 12. ; Canfield and Clark, *Things worth knowing about Oneida County*, 40-41.

²⁰ "Fort Schuyler (Stanwix) in the American Revolution: 1776-1781," National Park Service, Last accessed April 28 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/fort-stanwix-in-the-american-revolution.htm>.

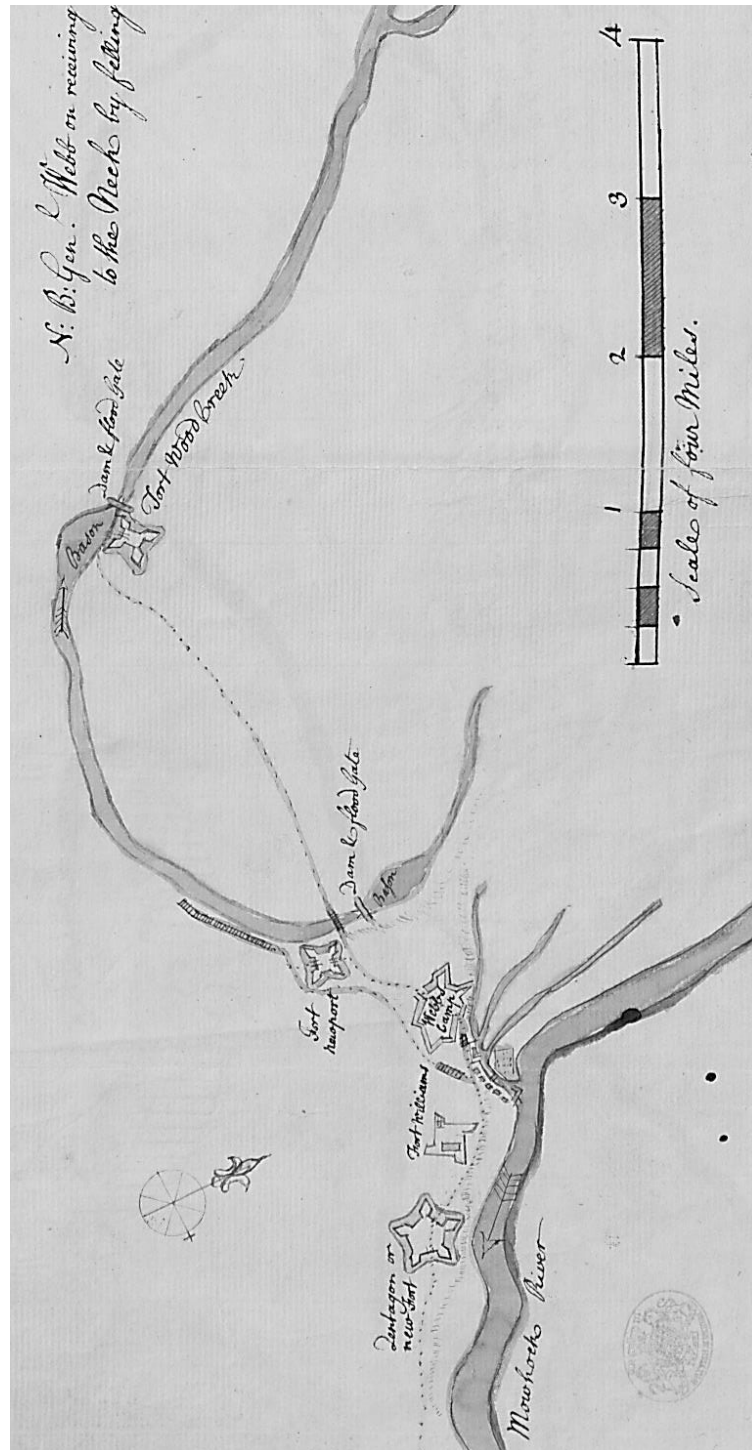


Figure 3. Detail of “The Course of the Wood Creek from the Mowhock [sic] River at the Onoida [sic] or Great Carrying Place to The Ononida [sic] Lake. Representing the Forts built on the Carrying Place by order of General Shirley: and Afterwards destroyed by Major General Webb.” William Shirley, 1758. [Source; British Library Collection. <http://explore.bl.uk/BLVU1:LSCOP-ALL:BLL01004987698>].

There is some controversy in determining whether or not Fort Wood Creek was built directly upon the site of Fort Bull, or if it is on a different site in the immediate vicinity. In 1757, an observer noted “the ruins of five British forts.” These forts would have been Fort Bull, rebuilt Wood Creek Fort, Fort Newport, the new Pentagon Fort (Fort Craven), and Fort Williams.”²¹ If Fort Wood Creek had been constructed exactly where Fort Bull had previously stood, the observer would have only been able to count four British forts—Forts Wood Creek, Newport, Craven and Williams.

Western Inland Lock Navigation Company

In colonial and later times, the only way to transport supplies inland through what would later become Upstate New York was mostly by boat. Goods were loaded up as far east as Albany and were moved westward by way of the Mohawk River. Boats that made it to Oneida Lake could follow the Oswego River northward to Lake Ontario. The problem lay in an approximately three-mile portage between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek, where those traveling the river would have to remove their boats from the water and drag them overland across the Oneida Carrying Place. At the western end of the Oneida Carrying Place was Wood Creek, which provided water access to Oneida Lake.

²¹ Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull: The de Lery Expedition against Oneida Carry. 1756*, 73.

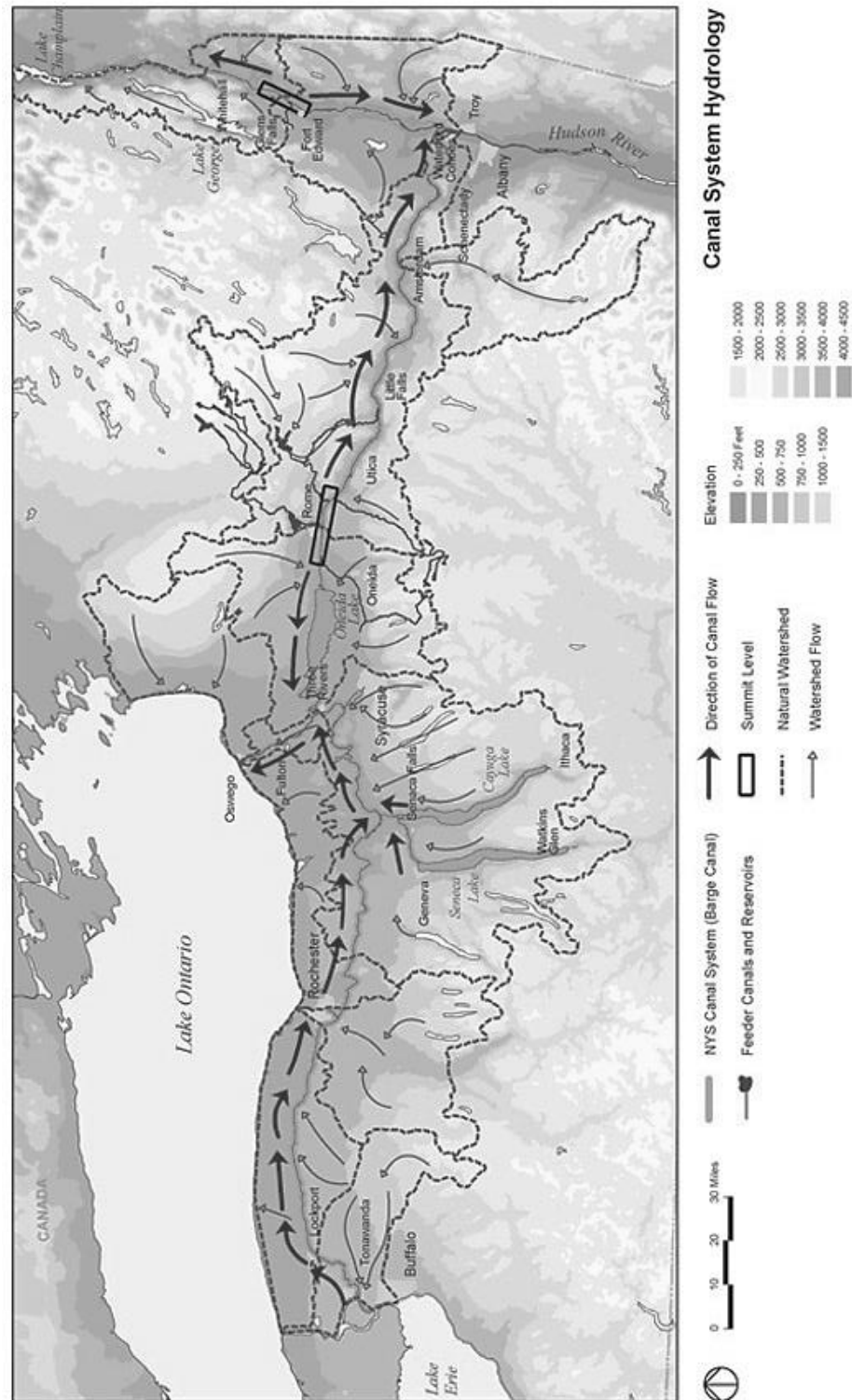


Figure 4: “Canal System Hydrology.” This contemporary map indicates the direction of water flowing away from Rome both to the east and west. [Source; Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, eriecanalway.org].

In 1796, the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company (WILNC) eliminated the need for portaging bateaux by creating a canal that ran across the Carry. Due to the low flow of Wood Creek, water was rerouted from elsewhere to amend the water level.²²

This first canal to be constructed across the Oneida Carrying Place was known as the Rome Canal. Locks, dams and floodgates were built, and it was completed in 1796. The water route of the Carry was experiencing its first major, manmade alterations. Unfortunately, the WILNC went out of business shortly thereafter and the Rome Canal and Wood Creek were abandoned as transportation avenues. The minor accomplishments of the WILNC at key locations in Rome, and to the east in Little Falls “gave a hint of what a real waterway along this route would mean.”²³ This canalization of parts of Wood Creek passed just south of the Erie Canal Village site (see Fig. 1), and the earthen remnants of one of its dams is evident at the site. Its proximity to the ECV as well as the subsequent canals present at the ECV site help to illustrate the importance of the land and how it affected water transportation across the Carry. The Rome Canal is immediately adjacent to, but not part of the ECV site.²⁴ The WILNC is still a part of the story of a canal’s potential to be constructed across the Oneida Carrying Place. Just how important a future canal could be, however, would be realized just decades later.

²² Philip Lord. *The Navigator: A Journal of the Passage on the Inland Waterways of New York (1793)*. (New York State Museum, 2003), 41.

²³ Ralph Andrist, *The Erie Canal*, (New York: American Heritage, 1964), 19.

²⁴ Lord. *The Navigator: A Journal of the Passage on the Inland Waterways of New York (1793)*, 37-41.

The Erie Canal

Future canal commissioners Gouverneur Morris and Dewitt Clinton, among others, felt that a waterway that reached the interior of the country had incredible potential. The old WILNC canal was utilized in 1812. “The war [of 1812] did emphasize the need for a good waterway; the rotting wood locks built by the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company could barely take care of the heavy war traffic.”²⁵ In the spring of 1817, Clinton was elected Governor of New York, and after a dramatic vote in the Council of Revision, the building of a canal to decrease the cost of transporting goods across the state was approved.²⁶

On July 4th 1817, a ceremony was held in Rome near what is presently South Charles Street, initiating the construction of the Erie Canal. Benjamin Wright, engineer, and Colonel S. Young, commissioner, were present at the ceremony, as well as Judge John Richardson, who had been awarded a contract to dig a section of the first version of the canal.²⁷ About two and a half miles to the west of this ceremony, the first excavation work on the Canal began on the same day for Richardson’s contract, and is referred to as the First Contract. It is argued that the work on the First Contract probably occurred near the site of Fort Bull and Fort Wood Creek on the same day as the ceremony.²⁸ “This noblest of all the internal improvements in our favored country, was begun July 4, 1817, about two miles west of Rome...”²⁹ It was the first construction to take place for the Erie Canal.

²⁵ Andrist, *The Erie Canal*, 22.

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁷ Dan Mordell. “The Ceremonial First Digging on the Erie Canal.” (From the Collection of the Onondaga Historical Association, Jun. 19 1967), 12.

²⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

Both the Ceremony and First Contract were documented in a few sources of the time.³⁰ The site where the first true construction activity began was located to the west of town. The decision to begin the Canal's construction in Rome was likely due to the fact that it was in the center of a relatively level 98-mile section of the proposed canal. The course of "Clinton's Ditch," —or the Original Erie Canal begun in 1817—ran south of Rome because this would not require the immediate construction of any locks, and two would have been necessary for the canal to pass directly through Rome.³¹

The first section of the Erie Canal that was completed on October 23 1819 and ran between Rome and what was then the Village of Utica, about nine miles away. The first version of the Erie Canal was a prism 40 feet wide at the surface and 4 feet deep. It was completed, in its entirety in 1825, connecting Albany to Buffalo. Based on Rome's geography, water flowed away from Rome both to the east and west (as shown in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5). While this made the first part of the construction easier, it also had an effect on the economic development of Rome. Potential business that would have been brought by the canal simply bypassed its commercial district. A little over two years later, on October 23, 1819, DeWitt Clinton returned to the site where the working construction, the First Contract, had begun. On this day, Clinton and other dignitaries traveled east on a boat named *The Chief Engineer of Rome*, completing the maiden voyage to Utica on the four foot deep, forty foot wide Clinton's Ditch, the Original Erie Canal (see Fig. 6).

By the time "Clinton's Ditch" was finished, plans for its enlargement were already in motion. In the 1830s, the Enlarged Erie Canal came through the Carry. It took

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

³¹ Richard Wright. "Governor Clinton's Ditch: A Chronology." (From the Collection of the Rome Historical Society, undated).

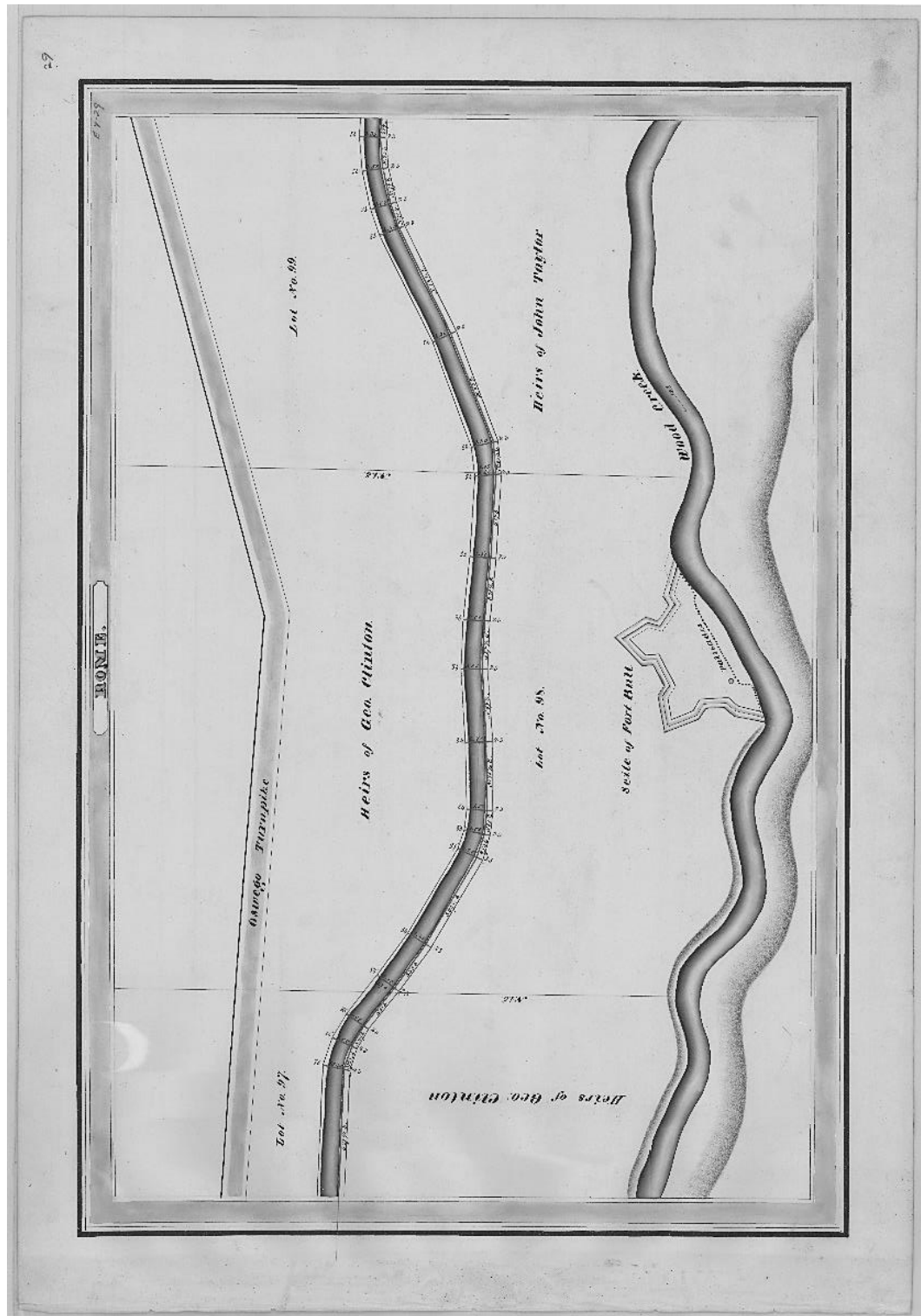


Figure 6: Map of Clinton's Ditch in 1834, prior to the enlargement. The site of the First Contract is immediately to the left of this map, in Lot No. 97. [Source; New York State Archives, A0848-77, Canal System Survey Maps, 1832-1843, Map no. E7-29].

a slightly different route through Rome than Clinton's Ditch, as that canal had originally bypassed Rome to the south (see Fig. 7). In the area of Fort Bull, Fort Wood Creek, and the First Contract, the Enlarged Canal ran slightly to the northwest of Clinton's Ditch. The Enlarged Erie Canal improved or replaced sections of Clinton's Ditch. More importantly for Rome, the Enlarged Erie Canal now ran through its commercial district, to the east of the area shown in Fig. 7. This is also visible in Fig. 10.

Near the site that would one day be home to the ECV, the route for the new canal moved slightly north of Clinton's Ditch as a new section of the waterway. This was the wider and deeper seven foot deep, seventy foot wide Enlarged Erie Canal.³² This was notable because in most locations, the existing channel of Clinton's Ditch was enlarged to the new prism dimensions of 70 feet wide at the surface and 7 feet deep, destroying the older canal structures.

The separate channel for the Enlarged Canal near the site of the First Contract allowed for a portion of the original, smaller channel of Clinton's Ditch to remain in place without being substantially altered. In the 1830s, a stone waste weir was constructed in the portion of the Enlarged Erie Canal near the site of Fort Bull and Fort Wood Creek.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Erie Canal was once again about to undergo an enlargement. Unlike the 1830s enlargement that brought the Erie Canal through Rome's commercial district, the Barge Canal had a different route that ran even further south of the city than previous versions had. In this way, a portion of the Enlarged Canal was also abandoned on the western end of Rome. It happened to also be in the area of the First

³² Wright. "Governor Clinton's Ditch: A Chronology."

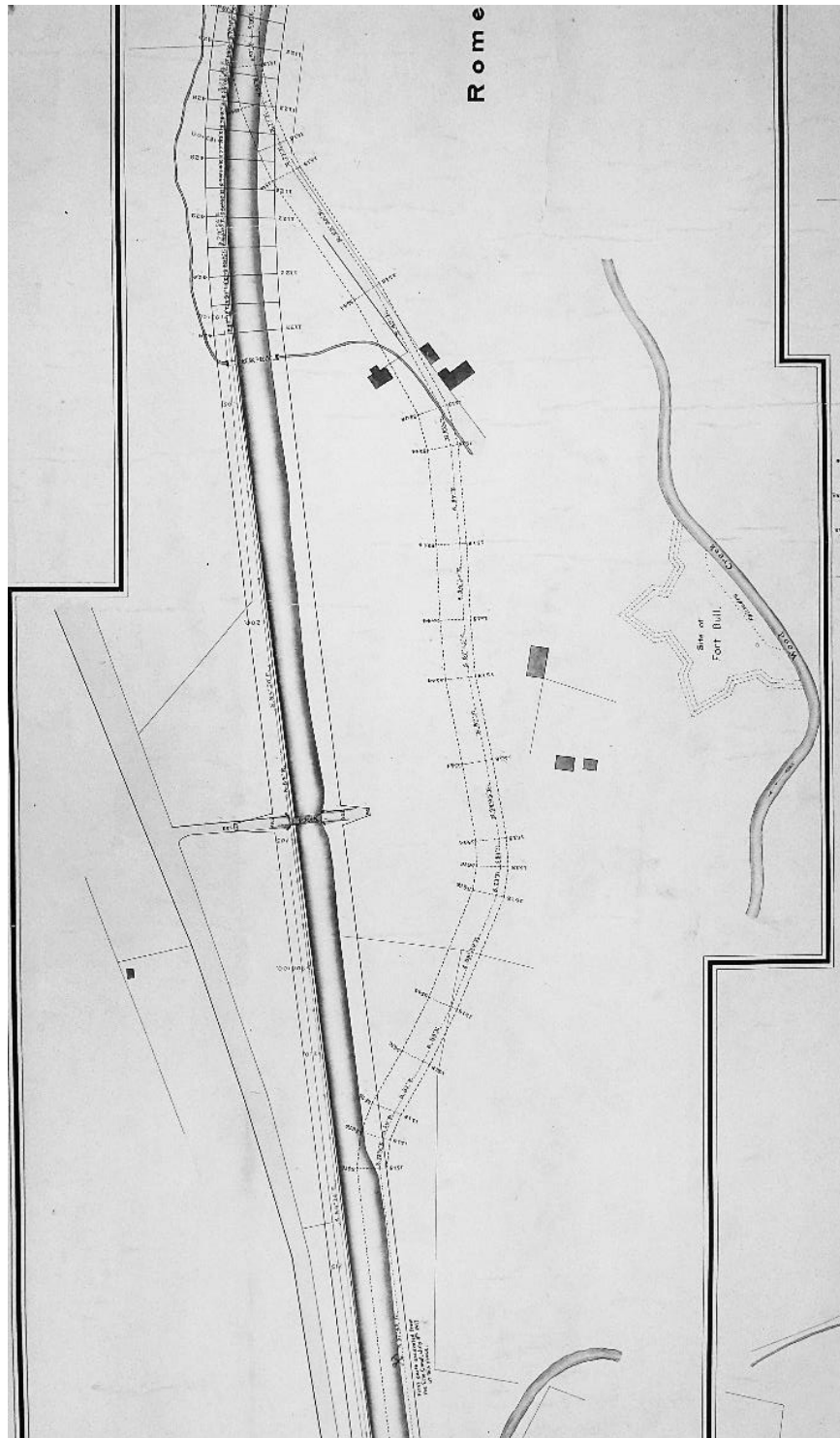


Figure 7: Map of Enlarged Erie Canal near the ECV site, showing the location of the First Contract (at left). Also shown are the 1830s Enlarged Erie Canal and below, the course of 1817 Clinton's Ditch, the site of Fort Bull/Wood Creek and Wood Creek to the south. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

Contract. This left sections of each of the first two versions of the Erie Canal intact and in place near the site of Forts Bull and Wood Creek.

Erie Canal Village

Starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the Bicentennial approaching, the city of Rome made preparations to reinvent itself as a heritage tourism destination centered around the city's historic sites. Revolutionary War-era Fort Stanwix, which famously withstood a siege by the British in 1777, had been named a National Monument in the 1930s and arrangements were made to reconstruct it. Unlike Fort Wood Creek, Fort Stanwix had long since been built over and its site was now the center of Rome's downtown district. Many historic and stately private residences would be lost in addition to countless commercial buildings. Urban renewal processes were utilized by the city of Rome to obtain the land for the National Park Service to reconstruct Fort Stanwix. Unfortunately, urban renewal in Rome was not limited to the land for the reconstruction that was taken from property owners. This was the second of three major phases of urban renewal activities that irreparably changed the city of Rome (as seen in Fig. 8).

Establishing Heritage

The Erie Canal Village (ECV) sits empty these days. The crumbling, now-closed living history outdoor museum sits quietly at the edge of the city of Rome, New York. It is not an actual village, but the collection of mainly historic, nineteenth century wooden buildings that were relocated from their original sites from across the Upper Mohawk



A tale of two cities — Above, Rome today — Below, Rome in the fall of 1969



Figure 8: Downtown Rome in 1969 and after 1976 when Fort Stanwix, National Monument, had been completed. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection].

Valley during the 1970s and 1980s. Along with the reconstruction of nearby Fort Stanwix National Monument, the ECV was hoped to be one of the solutions to the post-industrial decline of Rome's economy.

Rome's venture into heritage tourism, the ECV, offered a visitor the opportunities take a ride on the mule-driven packet boat (Fig. 9), enter historic buildings filled with objects on display, participate in a community celebration on the village green, or simply reflect on all of the history represented at the ECV site. Especially in light of urban renewal in Rome's downtown, the ECV held an affective power for the visitors and employees who spent time there, creating an emotional response that was keenly missed when the village ceased to be open to the public. This connection became all the more evident when photographs showing its current state were made public.

The ECV property was sold by the city of Rome to a private corporation in 2002. The last time the ECV was open to the public as a tourist attraction was in 2014. On a weekend in May 2015, an outdoor craft fair was held there. No admission was charged and people were able to walk around the grounds, but could not enter the buildings.³³

The buildings are falling into grave disrepair. The gated bridge that crosses the portion of the Enlarged Erie Canal that runs alongside the ECV remains locked. A cascade of problems have compromised the condition of the buildings, their contents, and the land itself. When driving past the ECV on Rome-New London Road, it looks like an overgrown parking lot with some older buildings on the far side of the bridge. The significance of the site is not obvious to the casual observer. A brief history of the ECV helps to place this property's significance in perspective.

³³ Steve Jones, "Change in management to bring new life to Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, New York) Apr. 27 2015.



Figure 9: Mules pulling the packet boat at the ECV. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

Historic Rome Development Authority

In pursuit of a tourism industry, the Historic Rome Development Authority (HRDA) was formed. In 1966, the first proposal for the ECV was made based on a report by Economic Research Associates (ERA).³⁴ The city had contracted with ERA to conduct an in-depth tourism study of Rome and its potential as an economic endeavor for the city. One of the ideas for the HRDA was the construction of an Erie Canal Village history museum attraction. This was to be composed of historic buildings relocated and assembled around a section of the abandoned Enlarged Erie Canal to resemble a 19th century village. The city of Rome contributed \$1 million to the ECV project.³⁵

Location

Before the ECV project was proposed, in 1965, Senator Kennedy had announced a grant of more than \$50,000 for the development of Fort Bull. “In announcing this today, Senator Robert F. Kennedy said the acreage will be used for parks, recreation, and historical preservation.”³⁶ Fort Bull Park was to be constructed near the site of Fort Bull, Fort Wood Creek, the First Contract, the remaining section of Clinton’s Ditch, and the abandoned Enlarged Erie Canal. This proposed park would have included a newly-constructed interpretive center as well as archeological excavations of part of Clinton’s Ditch and of Fort Wood Creek that were to be open for public observation (Fig. 11). Fort

³⁴ Economic Research Associates, “Draft: Development Potentials of Rome’s Historical Sites.” (Los Angeles: Economic Research Associates, Nov. 30 1965).

³⁵ “Historic Rome’s ’76 Potential: 615,000 Visitors Spending \$4 million,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, New York), Feb 28th, 1973.

³⁶ “Ft. Bull Project: City Given \$53,138 Grant,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, New York), Dec 7th 1965.

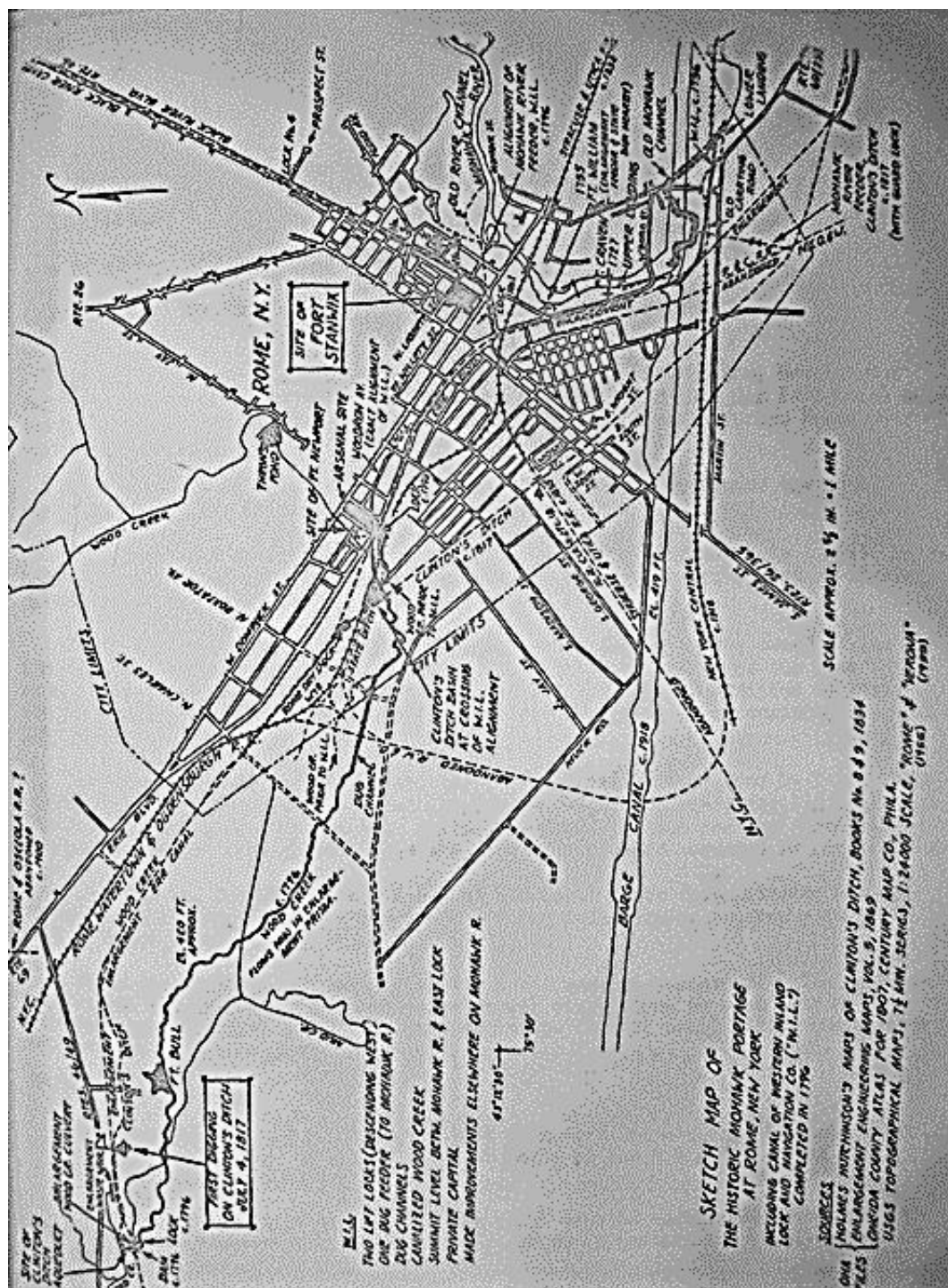


Figure 10: “Sketch Map of The Historic Mohawk Portage at Rome, New York.” Dan Mordell. This map, with north at the top of the image, shows the First Contract and Fort Bull in the upper left corner. This would eventually become the site of the ECV. The site of Fort Stanwix and the courses of Clinton’s Ditch, the Enlarged Erie Canal and the Barge Canal are also indicated. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, 1967].

Wood Creek, owned by the Rome Historical Society, was transferred to city ownership for the purposes of the proposed Fort Bull Park and the larger ECV project.

The original site for the HRDA's Erie Canal Village project was near South Charles Street, close to the site of the ceremonial turning of the first shovelful on July 4, 1817. This was closer to city and the original site of Fort Newport than Fort Bull.

The first plans called for part of the tourism venture to have a canal boat ride that visited Fort Bull Park (Fig. 12), which would have its own interpretation, including a museum and "controlled" archeological digs as part of the attraction. Due in part to the recommendation of another planning firm, Frank and Stein, to scale back the size of the first proposed Erie Canal Village, the ultimate location of the Erie Canal Village was moved to the site formerly proposed only as Fort Bull Park.³⁷ Due to financial and logistical concerns, Fort Bull Park was never realized.

This placed the soon-to-be-assembled 19th century canal village at a complex historic place. The ECV was to be located in close proximity to Fort Bull, Fort Wood Creek, the First Contract, the remaining section of Clinton's Ditch and the abandoned Enlarged Erie Canal. A for-profit tourism attraction would be built on land with multiple layers of history already associated with it. How the Erie Canal Village has protected this land, and how it is now posing a threat to the land, will be discussed in this thesis.

The land to the north of Fort Bull and Fort Wood Creek was farmland during the construction of the Erie Canal. Some structures were built close to Fort Wood Creek, but the earthworks of Fort Wood Creek were not leveled or disturbed. Subsequent owners of the land had respected the earthworks of Fort Wood Creek, so its earthworks were left

³⁷ Vincent H. Hogg, (Frank and Stein Associates Inc.), to Robert Latham. May 27 1968.

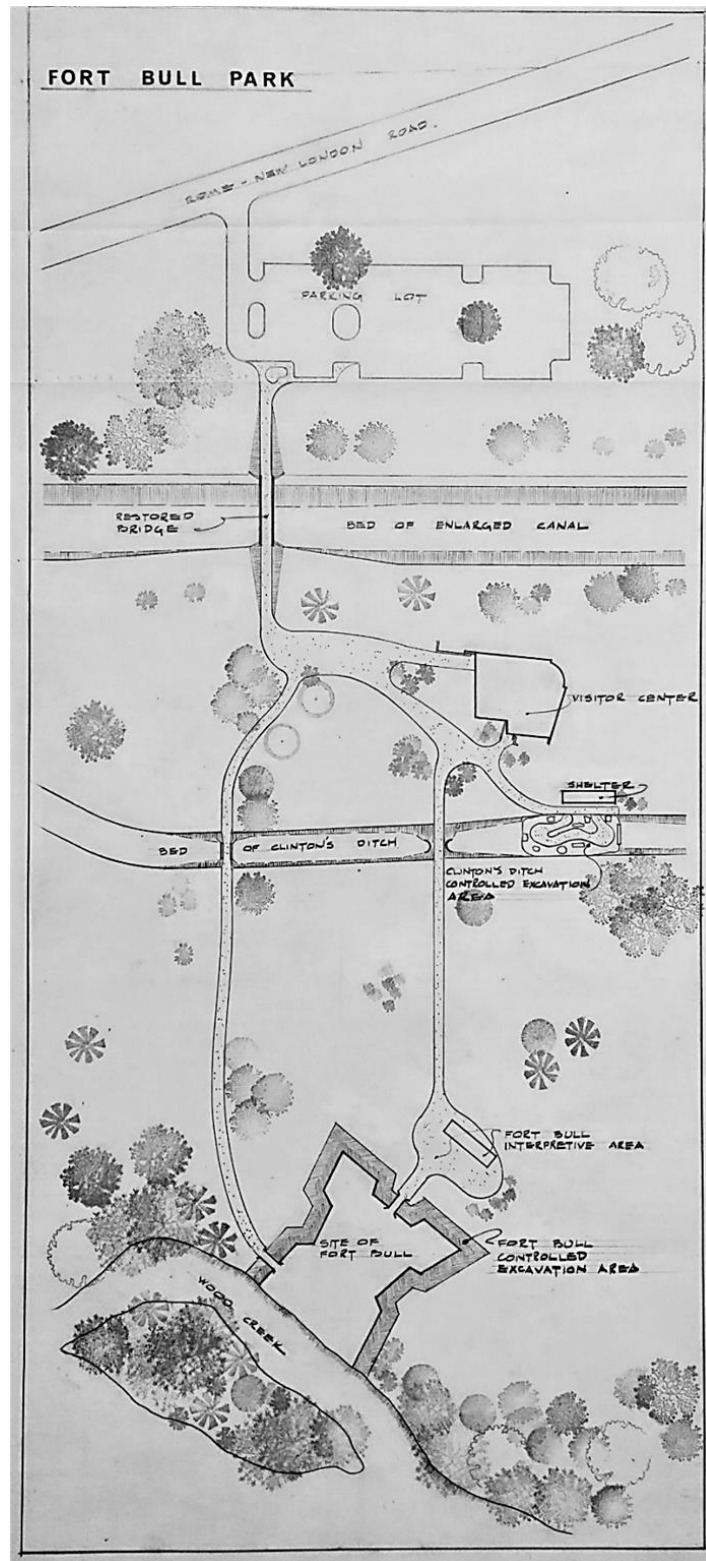


Figure 11: Plan of "Fort Bull Park." Circa 1960s. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

largely intact. Further north of the courses of the two canals, in a narrow strip of land that was bordered by a two-lane highway, sprawl from the growing city of Rome brought single-family homes to the area. Most structures were north of the canals and forts, and left the land to the south mostly intact. Farming activity took place at the site for decades.

In the 1970s, hundreds of acres of land in the area surrounding Fort Bull and Fort Wood Creek were “condemned” in order to begin construction on Rome’s historical theme park, as it was referred to at the time.³⁸ A federal housing program was employed to utilize federal grant money to acquire the properties needed for the ECV project.³⁹ An application for assistance from the Economic Development Administration was filed and HRDA was able to begin work on the future site of the ECV.

The first preparations for the ECV at the Rome-New London Road location were set into motion in 1972 with the condemnation of 600 acres of land to allow for the space necessary to complete the project. The Enlarged Erie Canal was cleared of trees and other obstructions (Fig. 13). The buildings to be relocated were set on the southern side of the Enlarged Canal, with some on both sides of Clinton’s Ditch. Several modern buildings for public use such as restrooms, a gift shop, snack bar, and canal museum were constructed closer to the canals and the highway. Piers and partial basements were to be constructed as foundations for many of the buildings, thereby minimally disturbing any archeological resources present.

³⁸ “City to condemn HRDA land.” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Mar. 3 1972.

³⁹ “Resolution 107,” Rome Common Council, Jul. 21 1965.

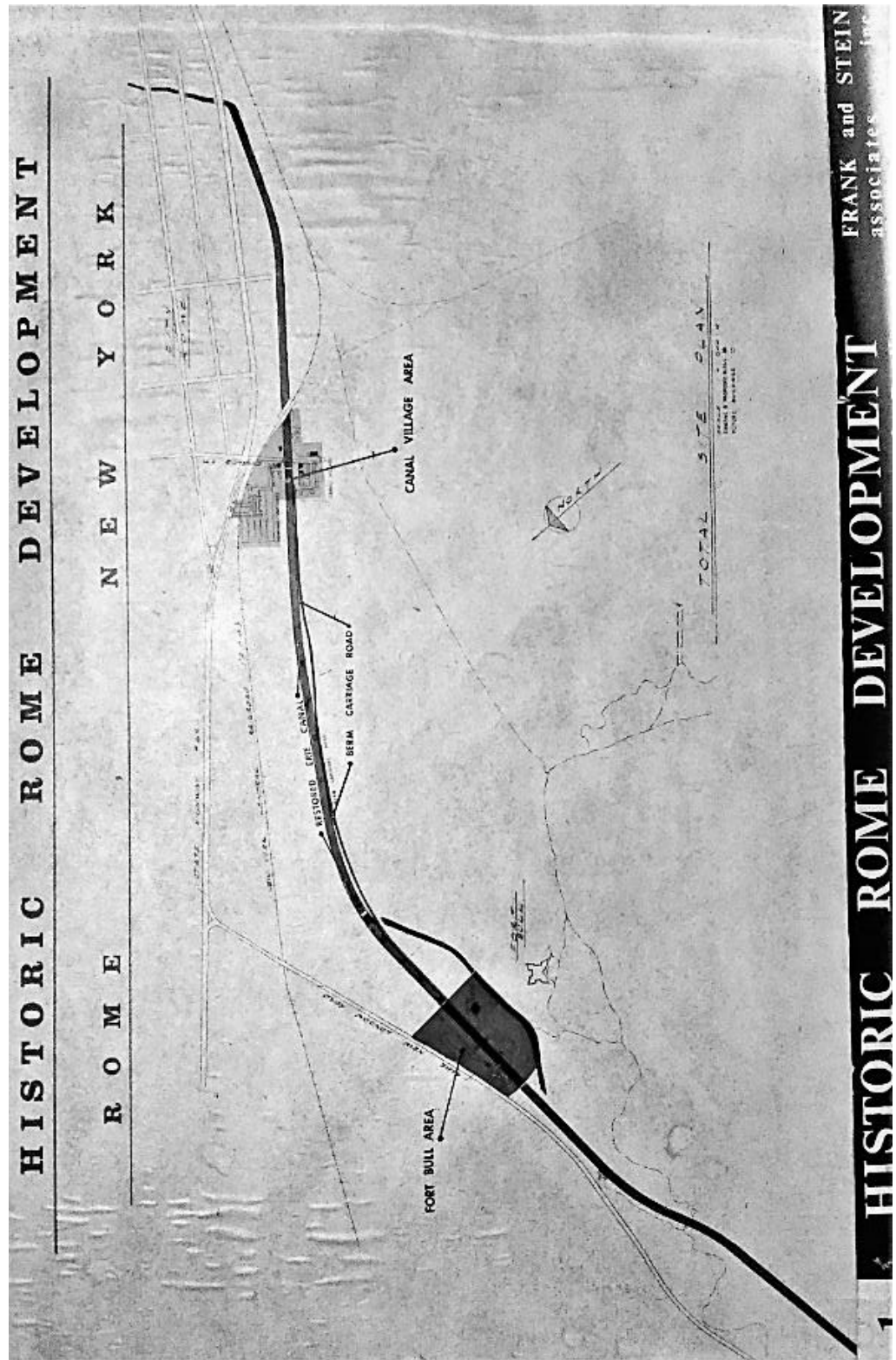


Figure 12: Frank and Stein's Historic Rome Development plan of the original, two-site Canal Village. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].



Figure 13: Clearing the canal, circa 1960s. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

Archeological field schools were held at the ECV in 1980 and 1981 with students from SUNY Cortland. In 1982, alerted by the acting curator of the ECV, a rushed, volunteer archeological survey was done at the “sheepfold,” a small pasture on the southern end of the ECV’s village green. This site was believed to have been the exact location of Fort Bull, according to a local historian.⁴⁰

A Victorian mansion was to be reconstructed on the ECV property in just a few days’ time. A last-minute decision from City Hall moved the relocation site, originally

⁴⁰ Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull: The de Lery Expedition against Oneida Carry. 1756*, 78-79.

planned to be close to the school house, to the sheepfold pasture.⁴¹ Ultimately, the fort was not discovered at the sheepfold. What was determined to have existed on the site, which was adjacent to Wood Creek and was along the Carry Road, was a prehistoric Native American site.⁴²

It had been the hope that this strategically – located prehistoric site, with its discrete activity areas illustrating camping, toolmaking, and cooking-heating by pre-European groups, would warrant further archaeological study and incorporation into Erie Canal Village's portrayal of human heritage. For a site within a center for historical study to be destroyed without this consideration seemed shortsighted. The writers were told that the only thing which would stop the Victorian house project would be clear evidence of Fort Bull I on the site itself. Although two musket balls were found no other Revolutionary War vintage, or 1750s materials were found. What was located was too early to interest the decision-makers it appears.⁴³

The Victorian mansion was ultimately reconstructed on this site (Fig. 14). The archeologists who worked on the survey expressed their dismay with the situation in their 1984 report.

To have located a discrete prehistoric campsite, overlooking the creek, adjacent to the known fort, and beyond the current extent of the (later) Village buildings, was an event which might have provided a new tourist attraction based upon the previous theme of the Village and expanding upon it. Setting [sic] a relocated Victorian house on the spot seems much less advantageous and informative.... We were saddened that there was no opportunity to contribute this type of expanded perspective.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Mary Reynolds (former curator of Erie Canal Village), in discussion with the author, Mar. 3 2018.

⁴² Ellis E. McDowell –Loudan and Gary L. Loudan. “The Bulletin and Journal of Archeology for New York State, #89.” *New York State Archeology*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield, Inc., Fall 1984) 49.

⁴³ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 49-50.



Figure 14: Shull House being reconstructed in the “sheepfold” area, atop the recently-discovered Native American worksite in the early 1980s. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

During the 1970s and 1980s, the HRDA and later the ECV, acquired through purchase and donation, various structures from surrounding towns and relocating them to the newly-created ECV site. The ECV opened in 1973, and structures were continually relocated to the Erie Canal Village site for about a decade. The first historic building arrived in 1974 and the last in 1985.⁴⁵

A New-England style green was created in the center of the ECV, in an elliptical shape that did not quite seem appropriate for this outdoor museum meant to represent a typical New York State canal village (Fig. 15). The edge of this green, with a small road that ran around it, was left without buildings on the southern side, which faced Fort Wood Creek.

Tours, re-enactments, festivals, concerts, competitions and other educational events took place at the ECV since its opening in 1973. A weekend visitor to the ECV might have encountered families learning about the Erie Canal or the historic buildings, or taken a mule-pulled ride on the packet boat. In 1986, the New York State Cheese Museum was opened in the relocated cheese factory at the ECV. Eventually, the HRDA was relieved of its operation of the ECV and the city took over both the ownership and administration of the Village. For years, the city ran the ECV, eventually deciding to outsource the responsibility out to management companies while retaining ownership.

New York State educational curriculum requires that fourth and seventh grade students learn about the Erie Canal. In the 1990s, there were a large number of schoolchildren who visited the ECV through field trips to the site. When interviewed for this study, Mary Reynolds, former curator, and Michael Milewski, former mule driver,

⁴⁵ “Erie Canal Village Development,” (from the Collection of the Rome Historical Society, undated).

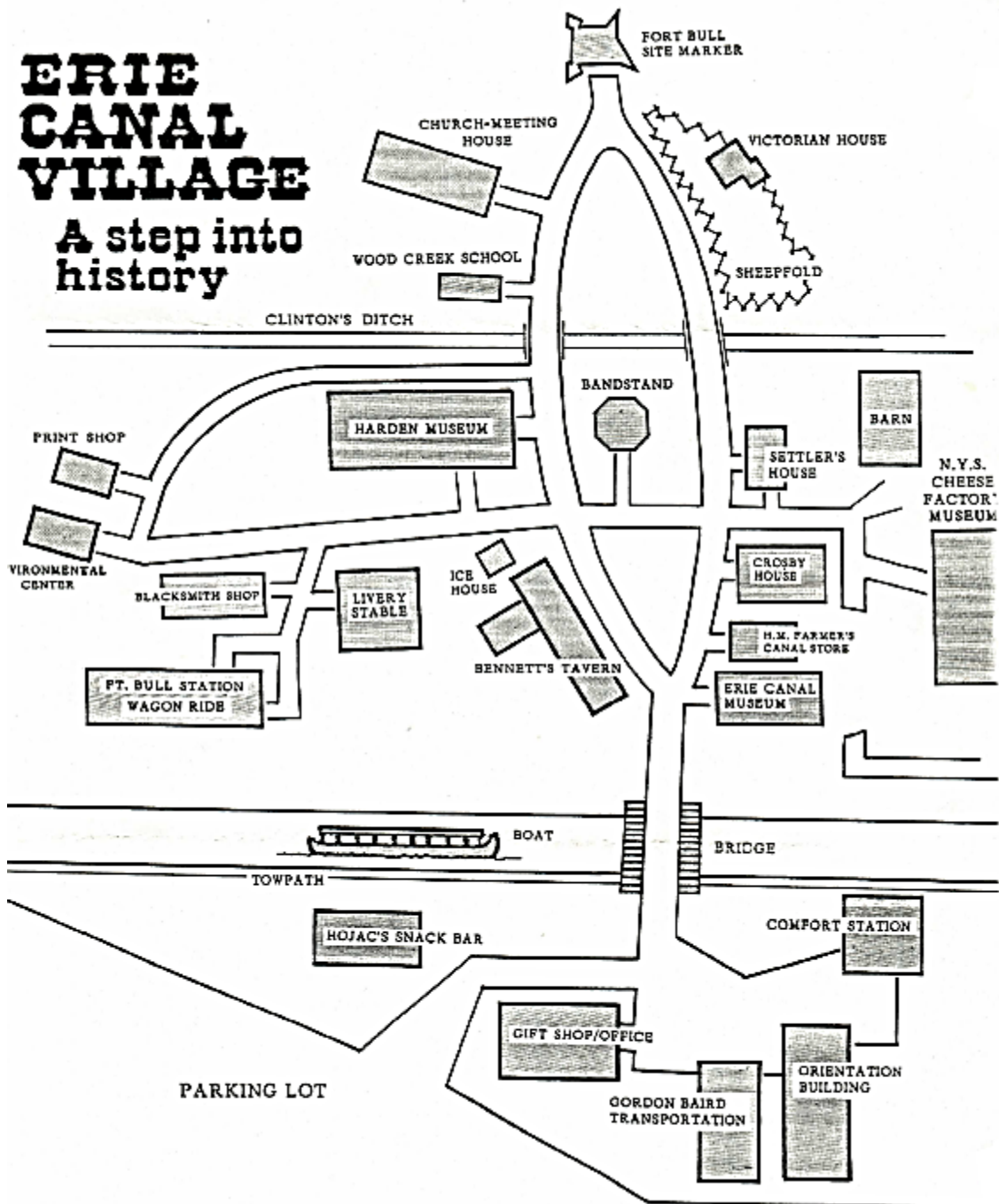


Figure 15: ECV Map. Circa 1990s. Image shown with north at the bottom. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

blacksmith and caretaker, noted that their favorite memories of their time spent at the ECV were those involving the thousands of school children who came to the village to learn about Erie Canal history. Mrs. Reynolds recounted instances where several school buses filled the parking lot, and dozens of groups of children explored the ECV with their teachers. With limited volunteers and paid staff, groups of children were sometimes split among different buildings, where one staff member would provide interpretation within the building, while other groups rotated to other buildings. Educating children about Erie Canal heritage created an affective connection for those schoolchildren with the ECV. Adults who visited the ECV as children, as a part of their fourth grade class trips continue to hold fond memories of the ECV. Beyond daytime school trips, seasonal festivals held at the ECV drew even more visitors, particularly those that were aimed at children. Events like the Fourth of July Celebrations showed re-enactments of the ceremonial first shovelful of construction of the 1817 Original Erie Canal (Fig. 16). The interpretation of Erie Canal heritage and history provided at the ECV still resonates with both those who visited the site and those who provided the interpretation to those visitors. The Rome Historical Society managed the Village for its agreed-upon three year term from 1992-1994, and stayed on for two additional years until 1997 while another manager for the ECV was sought.⁴⁶ It was during the RHS's management of the Village that for the only time since its establishment, the local newspaper ran a story that the ECV had actually made a profit.⁴⁷ In all other years, it lost money. Ultimately, RHS admitted that it had used \$48,000 of its own money to make up for the losses that the

⁴⁶ Patti Hendrickson, "City talks with organizations about running Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jul. 6 1996.

⁴⁷ Patti Hendrickson, "Erie Canal Village chalks up \$10,000 profit, society says," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Aug. 24 1992.



Figure 16: A Fourth of July celebration at the ECV. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

ECV incurred during its management.⁴⁸ In 2002, the city of Rome officially sold the ECV, its buildings, and more than 200 acres of surrounding land to a private corporation based out of Cape Vincent, NY. Its business is operating and restoring narrow gauge trains.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Patti Hendrickson, "\$20,000 approved for Village; Operator Sought for Next Year," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 23 1995.

⁴⁹ "Railstar Corp. Private Company Information," Bloomberg. Last accessed May 12 2018, <http://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=6138855>.

Buildings

The buildings that were relocated to the ECV were collected from communities around Rome, some nearly fifty miles away. The buildings represented the types of structures that would have been found in canal-era towns and villages. Other living history museums of the time were assemblages of buildings from places felt to be historically relevant. Such buildings were relocated to the museum sites. The histories of the buildings were relayed to visitors by interpreters, most of whom were volunteers.

Twelve authentic, relocated buildings were moved to the ECV. The Maynard Methodist Church, originally built in 1839, was disassembled entirely then reconstructed at the ECV in 1974. It is Greek Revival in style and after it was donated, a new church was built at its original site. Church services, weddings, and baptisms were still performed at the Church after its reopening at the ECV. With some of these events such as baptisms and weddings, members of the Maynard Methodist congregation were continuing their family traditions of holding important ceremonies in the building.⁵⁰ Also in 1974, the Railroad Station built in 1911, was the “newest” building to have been relocated to the ECV site (Fig. 18). Another authentic building to be relocated to the ECV in 1974 was a large barn. Its original build year is unknown, but it housed the Harden Collection of furniture and farm equipment while the ECV was in operation.⁵¹ Wood Creek School is a one-room schoolhouse, dating to 1856. It was used by its school district until 1953 and was moved to the ECV in 1975.

⁵⁰ “First Baby Baptized at Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 11 1977.

⁵¹ This section is adapted from “Erie Canal Village Development,” a typed timeline of the ECV, in addition to the scripts provided to the interpreters who were stationed in the buildings. These documents are undated. These documents were located at the Rome Historical Society.

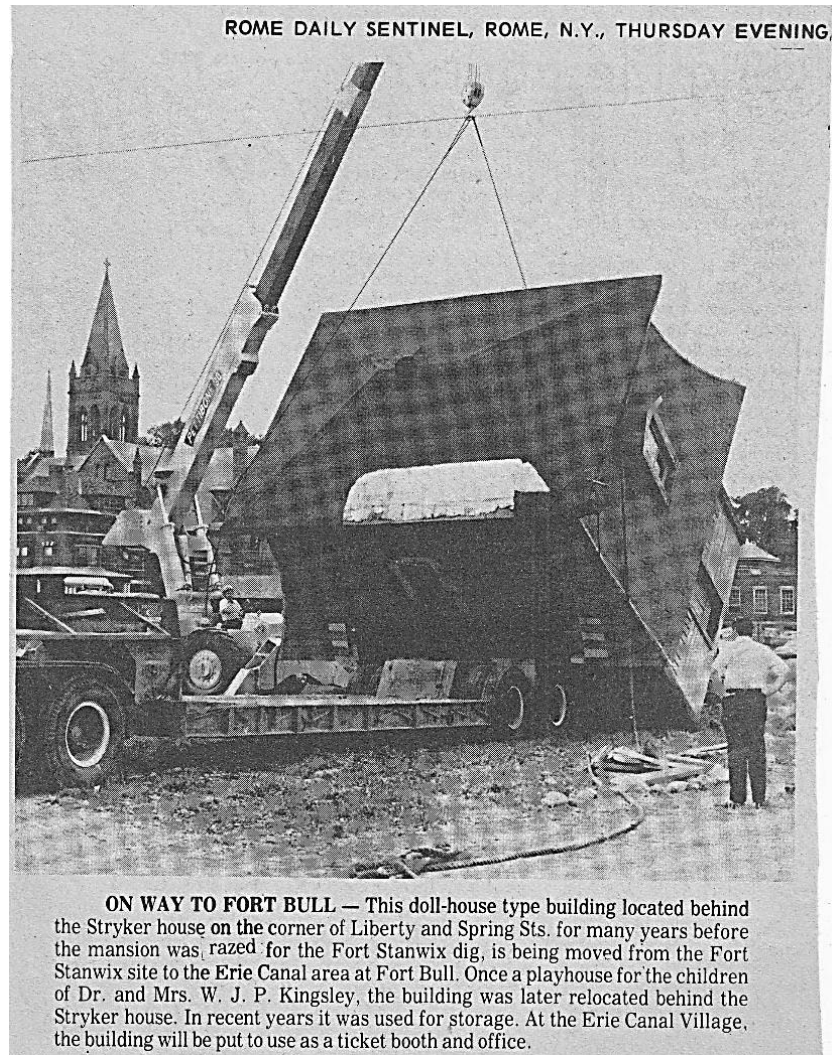


Figure 17: The Stryker Playhouse being moved to its new home at the ECV. Rome Daily Sentinel. [Source: Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

The Stryker Playhouse is a two story, Second Empire-style playhouse for children that was relocated to the ECV in 1975. It was originally located on the site of Fort Stanwix and its relocation to the ECV averted its demolition (Fig. 17). The only structure from downtown Rome to be moved to the ECV, the Playhouse was used as the ECV's ticket booth.

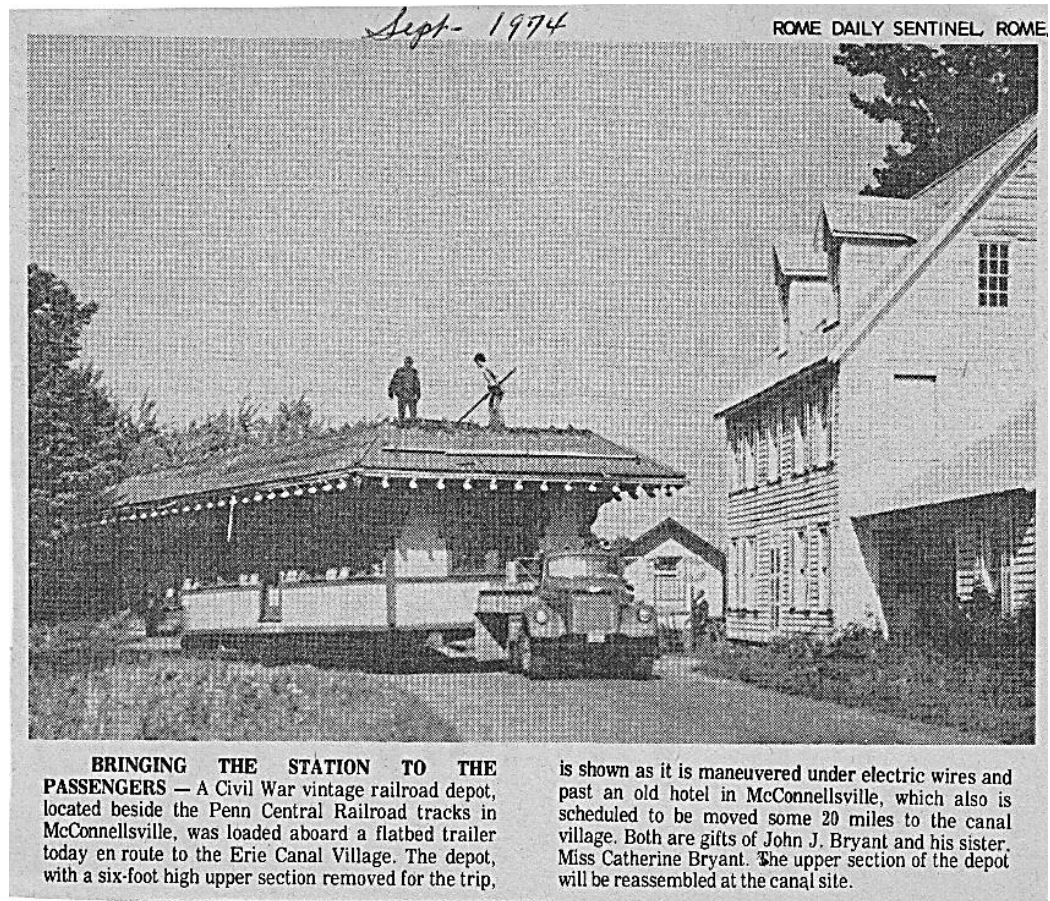


Figure 18: Train station and Bennett's Tavern in McConnellsville. The train station was originally constructed in 1911. From the Rome Daily Sentinel. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, 1974].

The Blacksmith's Shop dates to 1860 and was relocated to the ECV in 1976. The Crosby House, a small farmhouse, was added in 1977 and dates to the 1840s. Bennett's Tavern, believed to have been built in the 1850s, was dismantled and reassembled at the ECV in 1978 (Fig. 19). It has public rooms on the first floor, bedrooms on the second floor, and a ballroom on the third floor. The Farmer's Canal Store, originally built in 1858, moved to the ECV in 1979. It had been a general store and post office. The

Settler's House was also relocated to the ECV in 1979. It is a small, center-chimney farmhouse that dates to 1801.

Shull House is a large Italianate farmhouse that was originally built in 1869. Its impending reassembly at the ECV triggered the archeological dig that discovered the Native American site and was reassembled on the "sheepfold" area of the ECV in 1981. (Fig. 20). Shull House is currently gravely threatened, as its roof blew off more than a year ago and no visible action has been taken to prevent water infiltration.

The Weeks and Merry Cheese Factory, later known as the New York State Museum of Cheese, was originally built in 1862 and made cheese until 1917. Reassembled at the ECV in 1985, the Cheese Factory was dedicated as the New York State Museum of Cheese. There was some controversy surrounding its opening, as the Cheese Museum was accused of being a pork-barrel project.⁵² It was the last building to be relocated to the ECV.⁵³

The original build years for the historic buildings relocated to the ECV, ranging from approximately 1800 to 1910, contribute to the 1960s-1970s layer of interpretation. The interpretation provided through the "village" of assembled structures was the recreation of a canal-era settlement, with buildings of various ages and regional architectural styles demonstrating the development of a canal community that grew in size and wealth as the Erie Canal allowed the economy to prosper.

⁵² Danny Hakim, "Is One Museum Honoring Cheese Really Enough," *The New York Times*, Apr. 10 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/10/nyregion/is-one-museum-honoring-cheese-really-enough.html>.

⁵³ This section is adapted from "Erie Canal Village Development," a typed timeline of the ECV, in addition to the scripts provided to the interpreters who were stationed in the buildings. These undated documents are located at the Rome Historical Society.

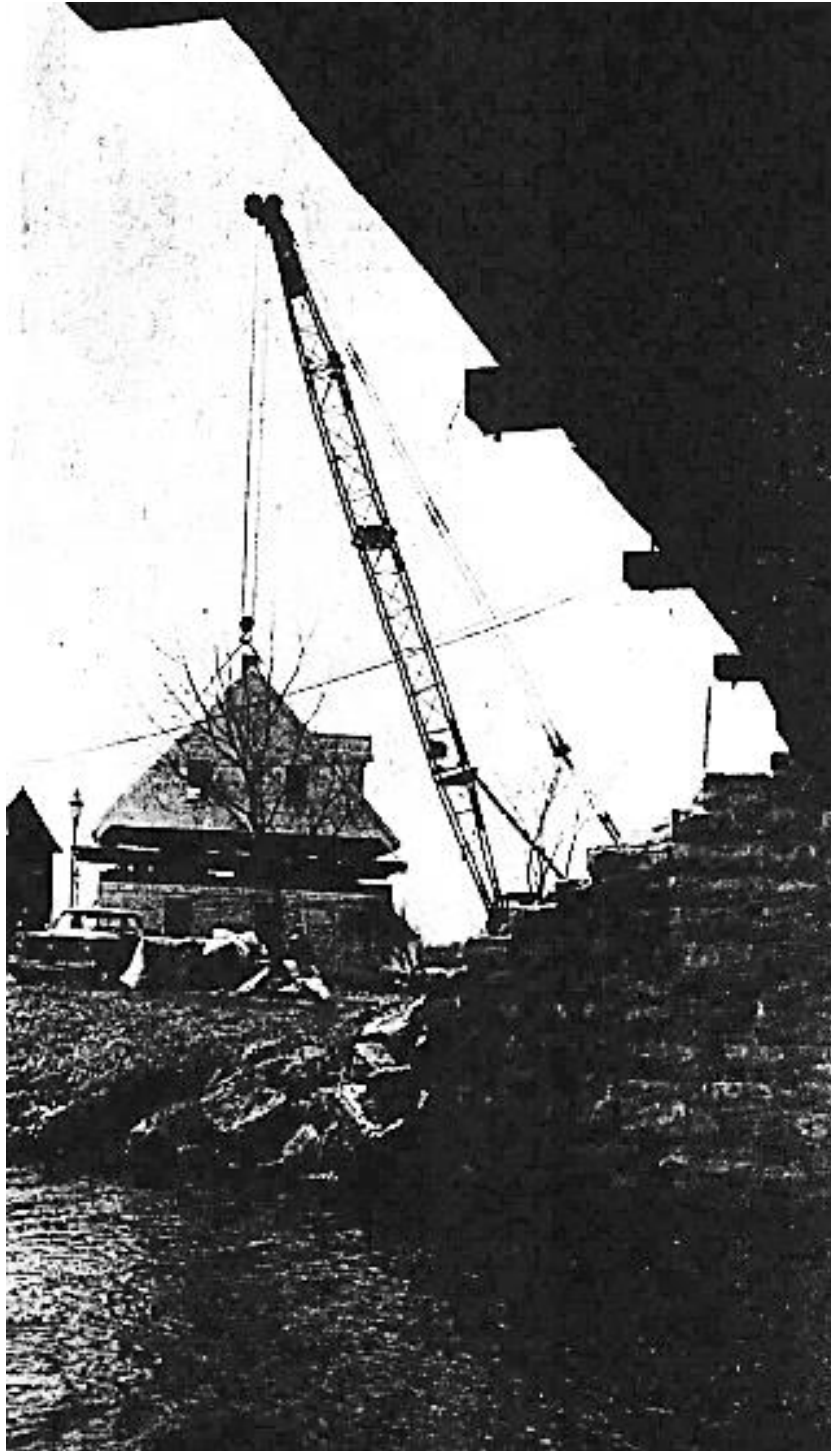


Figure 19: Bennett's Tavern being reassembled. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, 1978.].

An example of this development would be the addition of Shull House, an ornate Italianate that contrasted starkly with the other older, simpler houses and buildings relocated to the ECV. The interpretive element of the buildings chosen for the ECV was an opportunity for the HRDA to design a comprehensive collection of buildings that could become a lucrative tourist destination. A newly-constructed reproduction packet boat, pulled by horses or mules was added to the ECV, and would later become the centerpiece of the ECV (Fig. 22 and 33).

Examination of the Current Situation at the Erie Canal Village Site

Problems at the Village

The ECV opened in 1973, in time for the Bicentennial and the opening of Fort Stanwix National Monument. As soon as 1977, concerns were raised about proposed budgets for the ECV's operation that were double the revenues produced by its tourism activity.⁵⁴ Stories with headlines such as "From near and far to see us at our worst and at our best" ran in the local paper, attempting to gloss over the ECV's shortcomings. This article, for example, said that the comments left by visitors were mostly supportive or criticism that was constructive. Interestingly, "many of the negative comments came from Romans who complained that admission and ride prices were too steep." Finally, a common complaint overall was that there was not enough road signage to direct out of town visitors to the ECV.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "How to cure Canal Village Deficit Takes Back Seat," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 26 1977.

⁵⁵ "From near and far to see us at our worst and at our best," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 17 1978.



Figure 20: Shull House, completely reassembled on the “sheepfold” site. Circa 1980s. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

In early 1980, the mayor chose to relieve the HRDA from its position in charge of running the ECV and shifting it to the city's planning and community development department. The mayor "held up appropriating a \$50,000 city operating subsidy to HRDA," intending for the allocation to pass through the planning department instead of the HRDA.⁵⁶ A few weeks later, the Common Council officially transferred responsibility of the ECV to the city of Rome.⁵⁷ Later that year, an article titled "Basically Broke" addressed the idea of passing management from the city's Bureau of Tourism, which was then in control of the ECV's operation, to a private management firm. The article included some of the mayor's thoughts about simply not opening the ECV that year.⁵⁸ A bus tour company was briefly contracted to bring tours to the ECV "for promotion and management programs at the reconstructed canal village."⁵⁹ Events such as spaghetti dinners and Easter egg hunts were held at the ECV in an attempt to raise money for the ECV to be able to operate.⁶⁰ They brought in over \$1,000. For an attraction that at the time was costing roughly \$190,000 per year to operate and only saw revenues of \$95,000, the amount does not seem a substantial contribution.⁶¹ At the time, the ECV was just about to begin its seventh season of operation.

⁵⁶ "In dark about plans, HRDA criticizes Eilenberg team," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 9 1980.

⁵⁷ R. Patrick Corbett, "Canal Village responsibility turned over to the City of Rome," *Utica Daily Press* (Utica, NY), Jan. 24 1980.

⁵⁸ Dan Murray, "Basically Broke," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 9 1980.

⁵⁹ "Contract Awarded for operation, promotion of Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Mar. 28 1980.

⁶⁰ Dan Murray, "City Officials serving spaghetti among 'Save-the-Village' events," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 2 1980. And Brenda Pexton, "Egg Hunt to benefit Erie Canal Village," *Utica Daily Press* (Utica, NY), Apr. 3 1980.

⁶¹ "Canal Benefit totals 'over \$1,000,'" *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 7 1980.

Eventually, in 1980 the city decided to abolish its Bureau of Tourism, which had run the ECV after the HRDA was dissolved. The mayor stated that in regards to a study done by the New School for Social Research, “‘to no one’s surprise... there has never been, good, positive direction’ at the village.”⁶² This report was one of the first to call for the ECV to be run by the Rome Historical Society.⁶³ The mayor was quoted as admitting that “the society should have probably developed the village in the first place.”⁶⁴ The city invited the regional director of the Central New York Parks Commission to tour the ECV to see if the State “might be interested in taking over the attraction.”⁶⁵ 1980 was also the first year that the city declined to provide a subsidy to the ECV. Mayor Carl Eilenberg said that his administration could not ask Rome residents to support the tourism effort with their tax dollars.”⁶⁶

In 1981, a news article boasted of the high number of visitors, reaching numbers of 14,000 by June 20, where the entire season’s visitation for 1980 had been 27,900. The ECV was in operation from about May to August. The city’s Tourism Director quoted as saying that visitors “feel that the village is authentic, attractive and clean.”⁶⁷ The deficit

⁶² Dan Murray, “City Planners to Manage Erie Canal Village; change will abolish Division of Tourism,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 20 1980.

⁶³ Brenda Pexton, “Mayor would abide by decision to turn over village,” *Utica Daily Press* (Utica, NY) Oct. 25 1980.

⁶⁴ Dan Murray, “Mayor will ask Historical Society to take over Canal Village Operation,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 24 1980.

⁶⁵ “State to evaluate Village for takeover,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 2 1980.

⁶⁶ Dan Murray, “Tax dollars for tourism ruled out,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Sep. 9 1980.

⁶⁷ Dan Murray, “Erie Canal Village volunteers get high marks as attendance already half of 1980 total,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 20 1981.

for the ECV's 1981 season was recorded as being \$30,000.⁶⁸ The ECV's deficit for 1982 was recorded as nearly \$100,000. A solution to address major capital improvements at the village was to use Oneida County Off-Track Betting payments, a controversial proposal at a time when the Governor had not included approximately \$70,000 in State aid to the city. The mayor stated that the money would not go to operating expenses, but to "major repairs and new buildings." These buildings were to be the cheese factory and the general store.⁶⁹ 1982's attendance numbers were 62,456, the highest the ECV had yet seen.⁷⁰ In 1983, the city spent "\$80,000 in 1982 federal Community Development dollars to rebuild a Victorian manor home, Shull House, at the village." The article continued that the Tourism Director and the mayor "do not know where the money would come from to buy and install these buildings."⁷¹ In 1983, the city of Rome claimed that visitors to the ECV "infuse \$4.5 million per year into the local economy," continuing that the "estimate is very conservative." This number was determined by "using an estimated out-of-town village attendance figure of 50,400 per year, and an average area stay of 2.8 days per person."⁷² The volunteer coordinator for the ECV stated that in 1982, 20,000

⁶⁸ John Landsman, "Canal Village busier last year, but still ran a deficit of \$30,000," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 23 1982.

⁶⁹ "Mayor says Canal Village deficit doubled to \$99,168 last season," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 3 1983.

⁷⁰ "Canal village drew 57,111 in '83; hot weather, fewer events blamed," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 10 1984.

⁷¹ John Landsman, "Mayor to decide direction of Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 11 1983.

⁷² John Landsman, "Canal village pumps \$4.5 million into economy annually, city says," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 21 1983.

volunteer hours were recorded at the ECV.⁷³ The 1983 operation of the ECV cost Rome's taxpayers just over \$80,000.⁷⁴

In 1984, the city finally created a position for a "museum administrator," eleven years after the historic attraction was first opened to the public. This was done to alleviate the Tourism Director from having to be responsible for the ECV's operation as well as the city's greater tourism efforts.⁷⁵ According to the former long-time curator most of the staff were not formally trained. No consultants were involved, and most employees learned how to care for and interpret the site and collections while on the job.⁷⁶

In 1985, the Tourism Director resigned her position after a disagreement with the mayor. The tourism director "wants to see the Erie Canal Village work through tourism" while the mayor wanted "to see the tourism work through the Erie Canal Village."⁷⁷ Tourism was what was important to the city. History and the educational element of the ECV were secondary to tourism and the illusion of the ECV as an economic development tool. Albert Pallas, a former member of the Rome Tourist Attraction Committee and later the Historic Rome Development Authority, feels that "the ECV had both educational and entertainment factors," and that the ECV would have been economically sustainable if city leadership "had cared" after the Village was established.⁷⁸ It appeared that the

⁷³ Joan K. Kahler, "Canal village volunteers sought; 20,000 hours donated last year," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Mar. 22 1983.

⁷⁴ John Landsman, "Canal Village deficit reduced last year, but so were revenues," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 27 1984.

⁷⁵ "Museum administrator job created for canal village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Dec. 14 1984.

⁷⁶ Mary Reynolds (former curator) in discussion with the author, Mar. 3 2018.

⁷⁷ Richard Moss, "Tourism Boss quits in policy dispute with Mayor Eilenberg," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 30 1985.

⁷⁸ Albert Pallas (former TAC and HRDA member), in discussion with the author, May 2018.



Figure 21: The village green at the Erie Canal Village, facing Bennett's Tavern. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

administration felt that the success of heritage tourism in Rome was dependent upon the success of the ECV, while the tourism director believed that the ECV would be successful only if Rome's tourism itself were effective. The mayor appointed a staff member of the Chamber of Commerce as the director of the new Erie Canal Village Department of the city government. This occurred when the administration of the ECV was taken out of the hands of the Planning Department.⁷⁹

In 1985, the ECV was faced with a grand jury case for an employee who had embezzled \$14,672 in 1984. A report determined that money had not been "sufficiently safeguarded."⁸⁰ The 1986 city budget allocation for the ECV was \$282, 518.⁸¹

In 1990, the city again began to seek private management firms to operate the ECV. The article noted that "The 16 year old recreated canalside town has never been able to generate enough revenue on its own to operate without a taxpayer subsidy. The village ended 1989 needing \$172,246 from local property taxpayers." The director of the ECV department added a harvest event at the village, hoping to draw more visitors in the fall.⁸² In 1990, the ECV was in need of a new packet boat (Fig. 22), which the mayor was quoted as saying would cost \$100,000, as well as \$250,000 to replace the roofs of some of the buildings at the ECV.⁸³

⁷⁹ Richard Moss, "Mayor picks Chamber of Commerce employee to head new Erie Canal Village Department," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 14 1985.

⁸⁰ Joan K. Kahler, "City following most recommendations on handing cash at Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jul. 23 1985.

⁸¹ Michael Davidson, "Mayor: Canal Village budget to stay at 1985 level next year," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Sep. 23 1985.

⁸² Patti Hendrickson, "Mayor looks at management firm to pull Canal Village into the black," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Aug. 7 1990.

⁸³ Patti Hendrickson, "City still hopes private firm will take Canal Village in tow," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 21 1990.

In 1991, the ECV director stated that she wanted to “take it from a ‘static’ place that people visit to look at buildings and artifacts, to a thriving community alive with people going about daily activities common to a 19th century village on the banks of the Erie Canal.”⁸⁴ The ECV would grow from simply a large outdoor museum to an engaging heritage village (Fig. 21). This year, the ECV’s aid was again dropped from the city budget. This action also eliminated the jobs of the five full-time employees of the ECV.⁸⁵ These employees were laid off at the end of the year, but then were rehired shortly thereafter.

The Rome Historical Society (RHS) was contracted by the city to operate and manage the ECV in 1992. John Austin and Jim Crawford, employees of RHS, spent most of their time at the ECV while RHS managed it.⁸⁶ The Society was only given two weeks to prepare for taking over the administration of the ECV. RHS reported a \$10,000 profit in the first three months of its management.⁸⁷ In 1994, the wooden components of the waste weir had deteriorated to the point where too much water was let out of the canal, temporarily closing the ECV’s most popular tourist draw, the packet boat ride. RHS had reached out to the city to look at the waste weir prior to the malfunction.⁸⁸ In 1995, RHS agreed to operate the ECV for another year, provided that the city create a Request for Proposals for another management entity and provide a \$20,000 subsidy. In the first few

⁸⁴ Patti Hendrickson, “This is the year the Canal Village really goes to ‘work,’” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 25 1991.

⁸⁵ Patti Hendrickson, “Mayor’s budget drops aid for Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 2 1991.

⁸⁶ Mary Reynolds (former curator), in discussion with author, Mar. 2018.

⁸⁷ Patti Hendrickson, “Erie Canal Village chalks up \$10,000 in profit, society says,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Aug. 24 1992.

⁸⁸ Patti Hendrickson, “Weir do we go from here? Erie Canal Village needs help to keep its packet boat in water,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Aug. 17 1994.



Figure 22: The *Chief Engineer of Rome*, the ECV's second packet boat. Circa 1990. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

years the RHS ran the ECV, it did not have a city subsidy. It absorbed \$48,000 in losses to operate the ECV during that time. The Society did not immediately alert the city to the losses it had incurred. A common councilor stated that RHS “did the best they could” to let the city know about its losses.⁸⁹

In 1996, the mayor stated in his State of the City address that “we will move forward, committed to the preservation of our history, but cautious that we do not mortgage our future.” He continued that he wanted a private entity to own and operate the ECV. “Yet to be answered, he said, is the question of whether the city can legally sell or transfer property and assets that were acquired by means of state and federal funds.... This year we must grapple once and for all with the future of the Village.”⁹⁰ Later in 1996, the owners of another local tourist attraction entered into a contract with the city to manage the ECV beginning in 1997.⁹¹ This management company operated the ECV until the end of 2000. In late 2000, the local newspaper published a cartoon depicting the desire of the city to sell the ECV (Fig. 23).

In January of 2001, the city was closing in on finalizing a deal to sell the ECV to a private entity.⁹² In June 2001, the State approved the sale of the ECV. This action also returned ownership of the 4.49 acre Fort Bull property located behind the ECV, to RHS.⁹³ Further, the issue of the ownership and stewardship of the city-owned artifacts was

⁸⁹ Patti Hendrickson, “\$20,000 approved for Village; operator sought for next year,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Feb. 23 1995.

⁹⁰ Patti Hendrickson, “City talks with organizations about running Erie Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jul. 6 1996.

⁹¹ Patti Hendrickson, “Mangers see Village as ‘economic sleeper,’” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), October 18 1996.

⁹² Steven Jones, “Canal Village sale imminent,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 7 2001.

⁹³ Paul J. Laudato (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation), Memorandum RE: S. 5652, to James M. McGuire, Esq., Jul. 26 2001.

addressed. The city's Corporation Counsel stated that regarding the artifacts, "the ones we own will be transferring ownership to the Rome Historical Society." Ultimately, this particular transfer did not happen.⁹⁴ A contract was awarded to a museum consultant to complete an inventory of the city-owned artifacts at the ECV in fall of 2001 with an estimated cost of \$99,000.⁹⁵ A six-day inventory was completed in 2001 with the help of several volunteers, including the former long-time curator of the ECV.⁹⁶



Figure 23: Cartoon of the ECV situation, Dec. 15 2000. Rome Daily Sentinel. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, 2000].

⁹⁴ Steve Jones, "State Legislature approves sale of Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 27 2001.

⁹⁵ Steve Jones, "Inventory of Village artifacts assigned to museum consultant," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Oct. 19 2001.

⁹⁶ John Sorbello, "Volunteers inventorize [sic] Village's artifacts," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 19 2001.

The sale to the private owner doing business as Railstar was finally completed on October 30, 2002 for the amount of \$217,000. In 2001, attendance at the ECV had been merely 8,100 visitors.⁹⁷

In 2010, the local paper wrote “Despite generous donations of artifacts and buildings and the massive infusion of money from city, state and federal governments, the Village created on the very spot where digging of the Erie Canal started on July 4, 1817, never lived up to the expectations as a tourist draw.” The ECV, now privately owned by a “railroad enthusiast who has gotten his hands dirty with work around the Village,” was coping with ever-declining attendance and owed nearly \$60,000 in back taxes from the years 2008-2010 alone (Fig. 31). The mayor noted that he did not feel that Railstar was making the effort or investment needed at the ECV, stating of the owner that “it seems like the main objective is his train hobby.” He encouraged the owner to sell the property to someone who actually wanted to use the ECV.⁹⁸

By 2013, eight buildings had been “closed” due to safety concerns. Structural conditions were identified at “a third of the 24 buildings on the 214 acre site. In most cases, it’s the old style of construction, especially with foundations, that has led to unstable conditions.” The article noted that among construction projects, the “demolition of a non-historic shed” at Bennett’s Tavern was planned. According to the history compiled for the interpreters of the Settler’s House, “the other section of this house is used as the woodshed at Bennett’s Tavern.”⁹⁹ This project may have signaled the loss of

⁹⁷ Steve Jones, “Private owner hopes to breathe new life into Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel*. Mar. 1 2002.

⁹⁸ Steve Jones, “37 Years on, money-loser owes back taxes and ponders future,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Nov. 30 2010.

⁹⁹ “Settler’s House” document, from Rome Historical Society Collection, undated.

an authentic building element at the ECV that had been repurposed. Sadly, it is not be the only structure lost at the ECV during its private ownership.

In 2015, out-of-state investors entered into a “lease-to-buy agreement” for the ECV with its private owner, Railstar. The investors of the newly-renamed Empire State Heritage Park (ESHP), were quoted in the newspaper offering that for those considering a visit to the ECV/ESHP, they “will not be charging people to go there.” ESHP wanted to “enhance the overall experience of the tourist by filling out the Village and making it more of an authentic community.” He also discussed dramatic plans for repairing the “deplorable” buildings on site and adding new buildings.¹⁰⁰ In an article thirteen months later, the local paper wrote that the “new management group cut the chains barring the gate across the canal and into the site, but almost nothing has happened there since.” Railstar, the private owner of the ECV, did not respond to the newspaper’s requests for comment for this article.¹⁰¹

Also in 2015, the local attorney for Railstar was sent a letter by the city’s Corporation Counsel putting them on notice for not providing the city with information regarding this lease agreement with ESHP. Of primary concern were the lease regarding the artifacts, the condition of the buildings, and an illegal excavation that had caught the attention of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), New York State’s state historic preservation office.¹⁰² “Most of the 24 buildings were cited by the city as ‘unsafe to enter’ in 2012 and have remained closed to the public since then.”

¹⁰⁰ Steve Jones, “New owner plans to expand Erie Canal Village, open free of charge,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 17 2015.

¹⁰¹ Steve Jones, “Erie Canal Village at standstill,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 17 2016.

¹⁰² Timothy A. Benedict (Corporation Counsel), “RE: Erie Canal Village, Rome, New York,” to Charles R. Getty, Jr., Esq. May 15 2015.

The issue of RHS doing an inventory of the artifacts was once again addressed by the current mayor of Rome, who had been the Director of the Erie Canal Village Department from 1985 to 1991.

Issues affecting the proposed 2016 inventory included a code-compliant space to store the artifacts and complete the inventory. ESHP stated that they were waiting for the city to remove the artifacts so that ESHP could complete repairs to the buildings. One member of ESHP was quoted in the paper affirming that “Preservation... would be item number one.”¹⁰³ Unresolved liability issues were a concern for the safety of those who would be working on the inventory. RHS had signed an agreement with the city to conduct the inventory of the artifacts.¹⁰⁴ The inventory has not yet taken place.

Legal Issues Surrounding the Erie Canal Village

Reversion Clause

When he purchased the ECV from the city of Rome, the ECV’s new owner took on the responsibilities of the ECV, there were conditions regarding the transfer of ownership. Although the city of Rome was ready to let someone else own and manage the Village, the city still wanted the ECV to continue to operate as a museum and tourism attraction. The city made this clear in the 2002 sale of the ECV to the private owner.

Provided, however, that the party of the second part, its successors and/or assigns shall continue to operate the premises herein conveyed as a Museum/Tourist facility which shall remain open to the general public, and, in the event said use is discontinued for a period of ninety (90) consecutive days or longer, with the exception of seasonal closure, the title

¹⁰³ Steve Jones, “Erie Canal Village at standstill,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 17 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Steve Jones, “Repairs, artifacts at center of conflict at Erie Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jun. 13 2016.

may revert back to the City of Rome. That this provision shall be a covenant running with the land and shall be binding upon the grantee, its successors and/or assigns.¹⁰⁵

Currently, the ECV is still leased to Empire State Heritage Park. The property's private owner has remained the same, but the name of his corporation has changed from Railstar to Wheelhorse since the time of the ECV's sale.¹⁰⁶ The ECV has not operated as an attraction or museum that is open to the public since 2014, and the property's exterior space was open to the public for one day in 2016 and one day in 2017. Many of the buildings have not been accessible since 2012 due to safety concerns. More than ninety days of the ECV's normal seasonal operations—typically from spring to fall—have passed, therefore the city of Rome should be able to resume ownership of the property. The city's reasons for not acting upon this reversion clause are not known. Recently, the mayor of Rome, who once managed the ECV when it was under city ownership, addressed the issue of the reversion clause. She was quoted in the local newspaper as stating that the city ““could never step in and take it,”” with the article continuing that “it would cost it \$10 million or more to bring it up to a condition where it could be operated properly.”¹⁰⁷ The ECV's reversion clause could have been acted upon years ago. The mayor, who once ran the ECV, is finally addressing the reversion clause, only to give the impression to be given that it is too late to make repairs.

¹⁰⁵ Bargain and Sale Deed (between City of Rome and Railstar Corporation, Oct. 30 2002) 3.

¹⁰⁶ While the name has recently changed from Railstar to Wheelhorse, the documents discussed here referred to Railstar as the owner and the study will use the name “Railstar” when referring to the private corporation that purchased the ECV in 2002 and continues to own the property.

¹⁰⁷ Steve Jones, “City focus on development in 2018,” Rome Daily Sentinel (Rome, NY), Jan. 3 2018. <http://romesentinel.com/rome/city-focus-on-development-in-2018/QBqqIC!Ko1U1kzvZZVHRkTSIFvMw/>.

Lease of Artifacts

In June of 2015 the city of Rome's Corporation Counsel sent a letter to the lawyer for Railstar, the private owner, as a result of statements made by a former employee of Railstar's tenant, ESHP. The employee took to social media and the local print newspaper stating that ESHP was claiming ownership of the artifacts inside the buildings of the ECV buildings.¹⁰⁸ These artifacts, including the contents of several museum buildings, were not part of the 2002 sale of the ECV buildings and properties to Railstar. These items are still owned by the city of Rome and were leased to Railstar for no cost at the time of the sale of the ECV. The intention was that the ECV would be operated as it always had been, as a historical village with museum exhibits. For this reason, the artifacts were leased at no charge to Railstar.

Relevant documentation that could be obtained for the purposes of this study is a contract that is unsigned, undated and unexecuted. The draft "lease" for the artifacts, or museum objects, states that: "OWNERSHIP: The artifacts are and shall remain at all times the sole property of LESSOR, and LESSEE shall have no right, title or interest therein except as expressly set forth in this lease."¹⁰⁹ The ownership of these artifacts is well-known: the local print newspaper, the Rome Daily Sentinel, referred to the artifacts

¹⁰⁸ Steve Jones, "Change in management to bring new life to Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 27 2015. <http://romesentinel.com/rome/change-in-management-to-bring-new-life-to-erie-canal-village/QBqobp!PScXi45K@TSWasXkN5JfVA/>.

¹⁰⁹ Lease Agreement for City-owned Artifacts (between city of Rome and Railstar, 2002), 2.

in April 2015 when the situation surrounding the ECV began to deteriorate along with its buildings.¹¹⁰

The “Lease Agreement” for the artifacts states “(t)he lessee agrees as follows: To maintain and operate the Erie Canal Village primarily as a Museum/Tourism facility open to the public; to maintain, preserve, and protect the historical integrity of the artifacts; and to display the artifacts at the Erie Canal Village.”¹¹¹ The “lease” states that the artifacts are to be used by the “lessee for display and use in lessee’s operation and maintenance of the ECV. Lessee agrees not to use the artifacts for any other purposes.”¹¹² In the document, it is stated that the lease for the artifacts would begin on the date of the closing of the sale of the ECV to Railstar and would last for ten years, unless terminated earlier. Proper insurance would have to be obtained by Railstar to protect the artifacts.¹¹³ Following the first 10-year term, the option to renew for four additional ten-year terms was offered, provided the “lessee shall not be permitted to renew the lease if it is in default of any provisions hereof.”¹¹⁴ This term, had the lease been adhered to, would have been up in 2012, ten years after the ECV was sold to Railstar. It appears that if the ECV was not operating as a Museum/Tourism facility, it was not complying with the terms. Therefore not only would Railstar be unable to renew their lease on the artifacts, but they could have had their current lease revoked.

¹¹⁰ Steve Jones, “Change in management to bring new life to Erie Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 27 2015. <http://romesentinel.com/rome/change-in-management-to-bring-new-life-to-erie-canal-village/QBqobp!PScXi45K@TSWasXkN5JfVA/>.

¹¹¹ Lease Agreement for city-owned artifacts, 1.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 2.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

Until late summer of 2017, the majority of the artifacts remained in place in the buildings. Some were moved to a different building at the ECV and put in storage. Two privately-owned collections on display at the ECV were quietly withdrawn, and loaned elsewhere to other institutions.¹¹⁵ The loss of these collections, along with the deterioration of the city-owned artifacts at the site, will affect any future attempts to reopen the ECV as it once existed.

A complication is that the artifacts cannot safely be moved from the buildings by Railstar, where they are currently in danger of being destroyed as the buildings' deterioration has led to water damage. The buildings are unsafe for city employees to enter to retrieve the artifacts due to the damage which includes roof and foundation issues. Some work may have been done to rectify the structural problems of the buildings, but this is not certain. The city informed the owners that the buildings were "unsafe to enter."¹¹⁶ The lease agreement for the artifacts included a provision that stated the lessee of the artifacts (Railstar), was to carry sufficient insurance on the artifacts and was expected to keep the artifacts in good condition.¹¹⁷ It is not known if proper insurance has been obtained for the artifacts. Railstar and its tenants, ESHP, claim that they can't repair the damaged to the buildings with the artifacts inside. The President of

¹¹⁵ In reference to the Harden Furniture and Farm Equipment and Canal Society collections.

¹¹⁶ Steve Jones, "Change in management to bring new life to Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 27 2015. <http://romesentinel.com/rome/change-in-management-to-bring-new-life-to-erie-canal-village/QBqobp!PScXi45K@TSWasXkN5JfVA/>.

¹¹⁷ Lease Agreement for City-owned Artifacts, 3.

the Rome Historical Society Board of Trustees responded on social media, citing safety and liability as the reasons for the delay in accessing the artifacts.¹¹⁸

The current situation is this: the buildings are falling into disrepair, that disrepair is damaging the city-owned artifacts, the artifacts can't safely be accessed for removal to a safer place, and repairing the damage to the buildings cannot or is not being done with the artifacts in place.¹¹⁹ The ECV lost one of its largest collections in September of 2014. Donated by the family that owns Harden Furniture, based in nearby McConnellsville, the Harden Collection of 19th century vehicles and farm equipment had been on display at the ECV for decades. As a result of current circumstances, the entire collection was taken back by the Harden family and re-donated to different museum in Upstate New York.¹²⁰ The collection belonging to the Canal Society of New York State was also removed from the ECV. This collection is currently in the custody of the New York State Museum.

Lease for Canal Bed

Another unsigned contract regarding a no-cost lease of a part of the grounds of the ECV site to Railstar addressed the bed of the Enlarged Erie Canal. It is presumed that the city of Rome retained ownership of the canal bed of the Enlarged Erie Canal, because if it had not, this lease would not exist. The lease, as with the one concerning the artifacts,

¹¹⁸ "People and Places of Rome, NY," Facebook, May 7 2015, Last accessed Dec. 17 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Peopleandplacesofromeny/permalink/10153846959380110/>.

¹¹⁹ Steve Jones, "Repairs, artifacts at center of conflict at Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, (Rome, NY), Jun. 16 2015, <http://romesentinel.com/rome/repairs-artifacts-at-center-of-conflict-at-erie-canal-village/QBqofo!1TrXRLmsn4fv0nZoOZ7Dg/>.

¹²⁰ "Erie Canal Village Opens for Season," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), May 2 2015. <http://romesentinel.com/rome/erie-canal-village-opens-for-season/QBqoea!Sn6xPdowhhtCYQzvmPjORQ/>.

provided an initial term to the lessee with the option to renew for additional ten-year terms. There is no known issue surrounding this lease and Railstar. The concern here is that the city of Rome may not have had the ability to own, sell or lease the canal bed. According to the New York State Constitution, canal property will always belong to the State, unless legislative approval is obtained otherwise.

Article XV: Canals. [Disposition of canals and canal properties prohibited] Section 1. The legislature shall not sell, abandon or otherwise dispose of the now existing or future improved barge canal, the divisions of which are the Erie canal, the Oswego canal, the Champlain canal, and the Cayuga and Seneca canals, or of the terminals constructed as part of the barge canal system; nor shall it sell, abandon or otherwise dispose of any portion of the canal system existing prior to the barge canal improvement which portion forms a part of, or functions as a part of, the present barge canal system; but such canals and terminals shall remain the property of the state and under its management and control forever. This prohibition shall not prevent the legislature, by appropriate laws, from authorizing the granting of revocable permits or leases for periods of time as authorized by the legislature for the occupancy or use of such lands or structures. (Formerly §8 of Art. 7. Renumbered and amended by Constitutional Convention of 1938 and approved by vote of the people November 8, 1938; November 5, 1991.)¹²¹

Provided that the extant portions of the Erie Canal present at the ECV site are fragments of their original canals, and serve no function to the early 20th century version of the Erie Canal, the Barge Canal, a different section of the State Constitution may apply to the Erie Canal Village site.

[Prohibition inapplicable to lands and properties no longer useful; disposition authorized]§2. The prohibition of sale, abandonment or other disposition contained in section 1 of this article shall not apply to barge canal lands, barge canal terminals or barge canal terminal lands which have or may become no longer necessary or useful for canal or terminal purposes; nor to any canal lands and appertaining structures constituting the canal system prior to the barge canal improvement which have or may

¹²¹ “Article XV: Canals,” Constitution of the State of New York, Last accessed Dec. 17 2016, https://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution/article_15_canals.html.

become no longer necessary or useful in conjunction with the now existing barge canal. The legislature may by appropriate legislation authorize the sale, exchange, abandonment or other disposition of any barge canal lands, barge canal terminals, barge canal terminal lands or other canal lands and appertaining structures which have or may become no longer necessary or useful as a part of the barge canal system, as an aid to navigation thereon, or for barge canal terminal purposes. (Formerly duplicate §8 of Art. 7. Renumbered and amended by Constitutional Convention of 1938 and approved by vote of the people November 8, 1938; November 5, 1991.)¹²²

The sale of the ECV needed to be approved by the State Legislature and by then-Governor George Pataki as it was parkland acquired with State funds.¹²³ Those required approvals were obtained, but it is unclear as to whether the sale or transfer of the canal bed was addressed as a part of the sale approval.¹²⁴ According to New York State Canal Regulations, a revocable permit can be obtained with special permission as long as it “does not create damage... to the canal banks and other structures thereof.”¹²⁵ Since the Erie Canal Village’s establishment, some repairs have been made to a waste weir that is part of the ECV’s portion of the Enlarged Erie Canal. The waste weir is again in need of repair due to some of its stones being displaced. The responsibility of the waste weir may fall to the city, or it may fall to the owner. This is not yet known, but the city does engage in regular excavation as maintenance activities to the immediate west of the waste weir.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Paul J. Laudato (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation), Memorandum RE: S. 5652, to James M. McGuire, Esq., Jul. 26 2001.

¹²⁴ Steven Jones, “State approves sale of Erie Canal Village,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Dec.3 2001.

¹²⁵ “Canal Regulations. Section 156.1,” Canal Corporation, Updated Feb. 2011. Last accessed Dec. 17 2016. <http://www.canals.ny.gov/about/rulesregs/canalregs.pdf>.

Demolition by Neglect

The Bargain and Sale Deed specified that the artifacts were to remain the property of the city of Rome. The Lease for the Artifacts allowed Railstar- and Railstar only- to use the artifacts free of charge in the ECV as it operated as a museum and tourist attraction. The zero dollar lease for the artifacts included the provision that the artifacts would need to be insured by Railstar and could not leave the Village. No provisions were made in the sale of the Village which required that the buildings be maintained. More than a decade of deferred maintenance on the buildings has seriously damaged both the buildings and the artifacts. In stark terms, this is demolition by neglect.

Railstar's current tenant, ESHP, is claiming that it cannot repair the buildings until the city removes the artifacts from buildings. The Rome Historical Society is willing to conduct an inventory on the artifacts on the city's behalf. The city does not feel that the buildings are safe enough for the Rome Historical Society to conduct an inventory on the artifacts, let alone remove them.¹²⁶ As a result, the buildings continue to deteriorate and the artifacts continue to be damaged or destroyed as a result of the buildings' disrepair. The already distressed hundred-and-fifty to two-hundred-year-old wooden buildings are willfully being allowed to decay (Fig. 24). Roofs have collapsed, are leaking, or have completely blown off. Structural problems have caused buildings to settle and foundations are crumbling. The case for the ECV being demolished by neglect is quite clear when the buildings and their interiors are examined. Buildings will soon be lost if they are not maintained. The city has little recourse for this failure in action.

¹²⁶ Steve Jones, "Repairs, artifacts at center of conflict at Erie Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, (Rome, NY), Jun. 16 2015, <http://romesentinel.com/rome/repairs-artifacts-at-center-of-conflict-at-erie-canal-village/QBqofo!1TrXRLmsn4fv0nZoOZ7Dg/>.



Figure 24: Shull House in October 2017. [Photo by author, 2017].

Archeological Excavation

The Bargain and Sale Deed also included a covenant preventing the disturbance of soil on the site of the ECV without the permission of New York State's Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The ECV site, particularly near the southern portion of the village green, is potentially the original location of Fort Bull. Following the destruction of Fort Bull, the recovered bodies of some of the victims of the attack were reportedly buried near the destroyed fort in a mass grave. It was recorded that there is a "Burial place of whites and Indians west of Fort Bull and south of the canal."¹²⁷ That neither the exact site of Fort Bull nor that of the grave are known make this provision in the contract all the more important. In 2015, satellite maps, including New York State's Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS), showed what appears to have been some type of amateur archeological excavation that was being performed at the southern end of the village (Fig. 25). The recollection of the French commander of the raid on Fort Bull, de Lery, may have indicated this as the approximate location of the site of Fort Bull.¹²⁸

A letter from the New York State OPRHP was sent to city of Rome's Office of the Corporation Counsel, dated June 2, 2015. The letter stated "that archeological excavations have occurred on this parcel without OPRHP review; and that the city of Rome is requesting assistance to ensure compliance with the deed restriction. Therefore,

¹²⁷ *New York State Museum Bulletin*, Nos 237-238, (Sept-Oct 1920), 636.

¹²⁸ Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull: The de Lery Expedition against Oneida Carry. 1756*, 78-79.



Figure 25. Overgrown village green where illegal excavation took place. Photo taken in October 2017, facing north. [Photo by author, 2017].

SHPO is pleased to offer the following comments and recommendations.”¹²⁹ Here,

SHPO outlines the significance of the site:

The OPRHP understands that this parcel may be the location of Fort Bull and possibly Fort Wood Creek, fortifications significant in the French and Indian War (1756-1763), and we would consider this parcel sensitive for archeological sites and burials associated with these Forts. The OPRHP does not recommend that human remains are disturbed or removed.¹³⁰

Further, it clearly stated OPRHP’s reasons on why excavations should not take place and that they support “the city’s efforts to halt the archeological excavations on the property.”¹³¹ No new excavations have been observed following the writing of this letter.

Values of Each Historic Layer

As there are multiple layers present at the ECV, there are also multiple historic values represented at the site. These values may be identified as having significance at the local, state, and national levels. Each layer’s value represents a distinct reason for the need to preserve the entire ECV site. The layers will be evaluated chronologically.

The Oneida Carrying Place

The first layer, the Oneida Carrying Place, possesses national significance. The Carrying Place was in use for many years by Native Americans who used the portage. The existence of the Native American worksite found in 1980 in the sheepfold of the

¹²⁹ Paul J. Laudato (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation), Memorandum RE: S. 5652, to James M. McGuire, Esq., Jul. 26 2001.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

ECV provides evidence for the extended period of use of the Oneida Carrying Place prior to European involvement in present-day Upstate New York.

Colonial and American forces used the Carry during wartime mobilizations in the 18th century. Some of the Americans who passed through the area decided to permanently settle in the area that would become Rome. In this sense the Carry also has state and local significance. The importance of the Carry contributed to the strategic importance of the area regarding transportation, as it provided an example of inland canal construction and feasibility in the 1790s with the WILNC.

French and Indian War Forts

The next layer, the presence of Forts Bull and adjacent Fort Wood Creek, also possesses national significance. This layer may also possess state significance, as these forts were essential to maintaining the supply lines to the British forts in western New York during the French and Indian War. The French and Indian War took place while New York was still a colony. The role of these colonial forts on the transportation corridor of the Oneida Carrying Place made a significant impression on the later development of settlements as far west as the Great Lakes. Communities still exist in places that were strategically important during this conflict.

The forts present at the ECV site are tangible historic resources. The 1756 earthworks of Fort Wood Creek are visible from the ECV, and artifacts dating to the 18th century have been discovered at the site. Cannonballs, clay pipes, and a pewter cup are some of the objects found without excavation of the site and are on display at RHS.

The Erie Canal

The following layer the Erie Canal, possesses national significance. There are three Erie Canal layers present at the site. The First Contract of the Erie Canal as well as the remaining sections of the Erie Canal, represented in the ECV's sections of Clinton's Ditch and the Enlarged Canal, possess state and national significance. The initiation of the construction of the Erie Canal is tremendously significant in the sense that the Erie Canal opened the west up to trade and settlement. The Erie Canal was one of the most transformative technological achievements to shape the future of the United States.

The initiation of construction of the Original Erie Canal took place in the vicinity of Fort Bull/Wood Creek and was referred to as the First Contract. Today, this location of the First Contract is part of the ECV property. Some of its original canal prism also exists on the ECV property. This is exceptionally serendipitous, as having both the site of the First Contract and an intact portion of Clinton's Ditch on the same property, undeveloped, presents an opportunity to embrace these parts of the Erie Canal's heritage—together. This portion of the Enlarged Canal possesses a stone waste weir, known as the Fort Bull waste weir, or overflow, that dates to approximately 1860 and is still in place on the ECV site.¹³² The existence of the First Contract's location in conjunction with the extant section of Clinton's Ditch, the Enlarged Erie Canal and the Fort Bull waste weir, together, represent all three areas of significance: local, state and national.

¹³² Dan Mordell. "The Ceremonial First Digging on the Erie Canal." (From the Collection of the Onondaga Historical Association, Jun. 19 1967), 28.

Sadly, this area is not currently recognized as eligible for listing on the New York State Register of Historic Places.¹³³ The ECV site should be recognized as being eligible for listing on the Register of Historic Places, given the aforementioned historic features. The aforementioned historic features are significant and should be recognized. Determination for eligibility could help to prevent damage due to encroaching development, which as of the writing of this treatise has already jeopardized the cultural landscape of the ECV.¹³⁴ The boundary of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC) encompasses the ECV site. The ECNHC presents an opportunity for the ECV site to be recognized for its significance on the national level. A potential partnership with the ECNHC and the National Park Service could lead to the eventual recognition and protection of the ECV and its many historical layers.

Erie Canal Village

Finally, the Erie Canal Village has local and state significance. The Erie Canal Village was an attempt by the city of Rome, via an authority created by the Common Council, to reinvent the city as a tourism destination. With the impending reconstruction of Fort Stanwix, National Monument, the city's Erie Canal heritage was naturally an

¹³³ As of the time of the writing of this thesis, the New York State Cultural Resource Information System did not indicate that the properties of the ECV nor those immediately adjacent to the ECV were considered eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

¹³⁴ The city of Rome retained ownership of the gravel parking lot of the ECV when the property was sold in 2002. The city has now offered to lease that land to the Humane Society of Rome, which intends to build an animal shelter with crematorium on the bank of the Enlarged Erie Canal. This proposed project threatens not only the feeling and association of the ECV with the largely undeveloped surrounding land and conflicts with the Preservation Zoning of the area, but poses a risk of erosion damage to the Enlarged Canal due to the impervious surfaces that will accompany the Humane Society project. Section 106 does not apply to this privately-funded project.

additional point of pride for local leaders seeking to celebrate their city's history, as well as create an opportunity for economic development. Like other Rust Belt cities, Rome's manufacturing industry had begun to decline. Capitalizing on the area's rich history, specifically the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the Erie Canal's contributions to the city and its identity seemed like an ideal way to solve the problems it was facing.

The site for the ECV was chosen in part because the first working shovelfuls that began construction of the nation-building Erie Canal were turned on this site. Clinton's Ditch, the Original Erie Canal that was begun in 1817 still passes through the center of the village green. In 1825, the entire canal was completed and became one of the most famous and transformational construction projects in the country. It opened up a passageway to the West as it finally connected the Hudson with the Great Lakes. The past two centuries have gradually filled in most of the ECV's remnant of Clinton's Ditch, but its significance of national importance has not been overlooked. The selection of the starting point for the Canal's construction may have just placed it near Fort Bull and Fort Wood Creek by chance. The holder of the First Contract coincidentally chose the same day as the ceremony near South Charles Street to begin construction, and the area's level topography of the area allowed for easier construction of the initial section of the Canal.

CHAPTER III

HERITAGE AS HISTORY: OUTDOOR MUSEUMS AS HERITAGE PLACES

The Erie Canal Village as a Heritage Place

The Erie Canal Village was developed in hopes of becoming a great historical theme park. It seemed that capitalizing on Rome's rich history was an obvious path to take in the city's quest for an economic development venture that would bring millions of dollars into its struggling economy. The motivation for the creation of the ECV was based on Erie Canal heritage, as well as Rome's local history. This idea was to be manifested at two separate locations on a large parcel of land that would be obtained for this project. The first proposed "canal village" site was closer to the city center and its plans incorporated some existing structures that were still standing on the property.¹³⁵ The second site, the proposed "Fort Bull Park," was placed approximately 2 miles to the west and a state-of-the-art interpretive center was planned.¹³⁶ Due to financial limitations and other encroaching development, the two-site park was never realized. The HRDA created a single site park that ultimately focused more on the "village" portion of the project. This heritage place was to be a modern fabrication.

David Lowenthal's comment, "at best, heritage fabrication is both creative art and act of faith. By means of it we tell ourselves who we are, where we came from, and to what we belong,"¹³⁷ captures the hopes and intentions of the HRDA when the ECV was

¹³⁵ Victor H. Hogg (Frank and Stein Associates Incorporated), to Robert Latham, May 27 1968.

¹³⁶ Plan of Fort Bull Park, from the Collection of the Rome Historical Society, undated.

¹³⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XVII.

planned. By obtaining historic buildings and relocating them on a historic parcel of land, a Bicentennial-era interpretation of 19th century Erie Canal heritage was created.

From the 1960s into the 1970s, Rome, along with countless other cities across the United States, made plans for urban renewal. This activity greatly altered the city's center as many new, modern buildings replaced old familiar ones. The identity of Rome's residents and their relationship with their history changed along with the appearance of downtown Rome. Ironically, some of this change was in the name of reclaiming a lost aspect of Rome's history. The 1935 designation of the then-lost Fort Stanwix as a National Monument became the single largest factor in the fate of downtown Rome. Senator Robert F. Kennedy pressured the National Park Service (NPS) to reconstruct Fort Stanwix and urban renewal was used by the city to obtain the land needed for the Fort's reconstruction.¹³⁸ The land was required to be donated to the NPS, so the city purchased the land at a cost of \$221,000 and then donated the property to the NPS.¹³⁹ Homeowners and business owners were forced to accept compensation in the manner of eminent domain for their properties. Residents voiced their concerns over the impending loss of their downtown and its landmark buildings.

In an honest attempt to accommodate interest in some of these buildings, including... the Stryker House, the Park Service stated that it would try to save and reuse these structures. Subsequent investigation precluded such action, and the buildings came down. Rome's mayor and the editor of the local paper at the time supported this action in the name of moving forward on the reconstruction and urban renewal. But, other people in Rome felt great loss and even possibly betrayal.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Joan Zenzen, "Reconstructing the Past, Partnering for the Future: An Administrative History of Fort Stanwix National Monument," National Park Service, XIII, <http://npshistory.com/publications/fost/adhi.pdf>.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 50.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, X-XI; 70. <http://npshistory.com/publications/fost/adhi.pdf>.

One of the affected properties, the Stryker House, possessed a small building that was able to escape the wrecking ball. This building, the Stryker Playhouse, was a two-story Mansard-roofed playhouse built for the Stryker children.¹⁴¹ In 1975, the Playhouse was moved from its original home on East Liberty Street to the Erie Canal Village. There, it served as the ticket booth for the tourist attraction. Its relocation, however, may have been more symbolic (Fig. 26).

A rare survivor of the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix and urban renewal, the Playhouse had once stood downtown. It still stands today at the ECV. In this way, the Playhouse is a physical representation of the shifting of local heritage within the city. The tremendous loss of the city's downtown and its old and historic buildings affected the attachment that residents commonly associate with their hometown.

The heart of the city was now gutted and unrecognizable, but at the same time on the western side of the city, the ECV was taking shape. This historic place with its new tourist attraction gave Romans some measure of comfort in that there was now a place they could visit to reconnect with their past. The Playhouse was able to survive urban renewal through its relocation to the ECV. Lowenthal captures the angst of urban renewal and interest in the new village, noting that "Heritage both celebrates victory... and consecrates loss."¹⁴² In this way, heritage is the successful act of making the past relatable in the present. It also is something that occurs in the wake of a loss, such as that of place. Romans visited, worked or volunteered at the ECV to engage with their past.

¹⁴¹ Diana S. Waite, "'Liberty Hall' (John Stryker House)," *Historic American Buildings Survey, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation. National Park Service*. (HABS No. NY-5511; HABS NY,33-ROM,4. Jun. 1970), 14. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/ny/ny0500/ny0597/data/ny0597data.pdf>.

¹⁴² Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 68.



Figure 26: The Stryker Playhouse functioning as a ticket booth and office at the entrance of the Erie Canal Village. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

. This past became heritage, an artificial creation in the name of tourism and economic development. Local history and heritage could be encountered in the presentation of the ECV. Residents could no longer see Rome's history as it once was due to the loss of downtown.

History and heritage are intertwined at the ECV. The ECV was created in a place where no village had ever stood. Only one of its buildings, the Stryker Playhouse, actually came from downtown Rome (Fig. 27). The other old buildings at the ECV were brought in from many places, some as far away as Little Falls. These were not part of Rome's history, yet they became part of Rome's heritage. The intangible concept of heritage plays a significant role in what is now a more than fifty-year-old, shuttered historic tourism attraction. Heritage is the representation of the past in the present, and the ECV represents part of Rome's past.

Until recently, this past could be experienced in the present as visitors could enter the ECV and engage with the outdoor museum and the artifacts on display. They could also learn from the interpretation provided for the historic layers of the site's land. "History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes."¹⁴³ Given the current threats to the ECV's survival and the need to preserve the historically layered land beneath it, there is a difficult decision to make. Does the authentic history of colonial forts and the Erie Canal hold more value for visitors than a contrived and artificial "village?" Could it be that the ECV is the layer of the ECV site that has the best chance of saving the entire property? How to understand the past in the present is the problem of heritage, and the problem of history as well.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Ibid, XV.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 144.

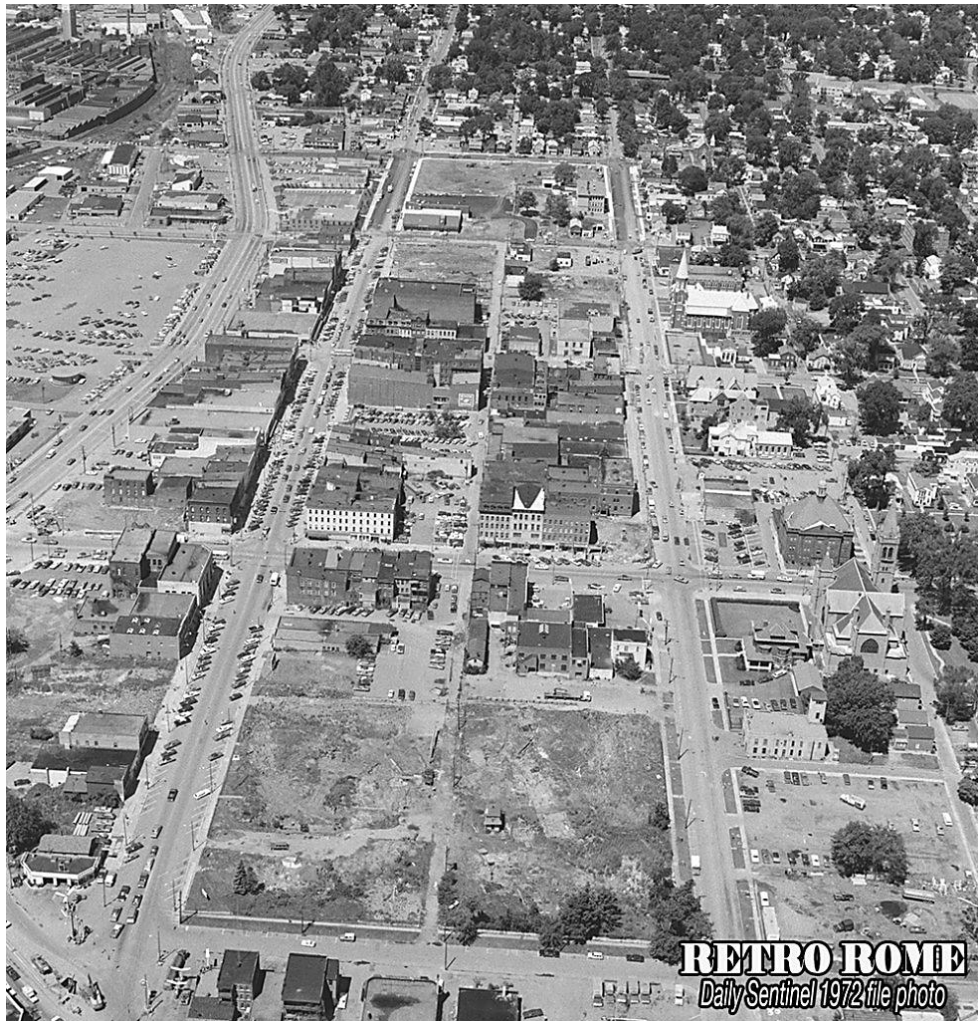


Figure 27: Stryker Playhouse standing alone (lower center of photo) after neighborhood demolition for the Fort Stanwix reconstruction. [Source; Rome Daily Sentinel, 1972].

Outdoor Museums as Heritage Places

Outdoor and living history museums were created in the United States as a way for the public to experience their heritage in a fun, yet educational experience. As anthropologist Edward Bruner writes, these places “enact an ideology, recreate an origin myth, keep history alive, attach tourists to a mythical collective consciousness, and commodify the past....such sites do provide visitors with the raw material, experiences,

with which to construct meaning, attachment, stability, and a sense of identity.”¹⁴⁵ These establishments were intended to be educational tourist attractions, but also present the public with an affective, meaningful way to interact with the past in a way that they can sympathize with. The Erie Canal Village is one of these such sites, and it has some similar challenges and goals.

Some representations of living history museums were located at sites carefully chosen for their history and assembled by relocating actual historic buildings to the site, as was the case with the ECV. A number of other living history museums include buildings relocated to the site.¹⁴⁶ Others were composed of newly-constructed buildings and structures that were meant to represent those of the intended period. Through interpretive frameworks, many sites generally operated based on a written interpretive plan. Carefully created experiences were developed for visitors to be able to immerse themselves in the day-to-day life of the time and place represented. The ECV as well as other similar institutions offered programs that were designed for schoolchildren, for example, to be able to learn from the interpreters and collections typically present at outdoor history museums.

It is vital for the organization responsible for the outdoor museum to identify the true mission of the endeavor. The importance of education and training in the mission of both nonprofits and for-profit cultural and heritage tourist entities allows for a coherent business plan, interpretive planning process, and a successful experience for the museum’s visitors. There is a need for the staff of such a site to be properly trained in

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 167.

¹⁴⁶ In Upstate New York, this includes the Farmer’s Museum in Cooperstown and Genesee County Village and Museum in Mumford.

order to provide the educational dimension of the outdoor museum to its visitors. Such an adherence to education is necessary to help local residents and tourists learn more about what assets are important to their neighbors and to themselves. This is a critical point, as this kind of engagement is a vital part of a community's contribution to its heritage places. If people are aware of the value of their resource, they are in a better position to feel a connection to their community's past. Heritage symbolizes what we have in common with others, what essentially defines us as a group.¹⁴⁷ Local residents who function as "tourism ambassadors" for the heritage place may be the best proponents for the place's ultimate survival.¹⁴⁸ Beyond the ERA study and the conceptual plans created by Frank and Stein, there was no known comprehensive or strategic planning for the ECV.

Local leaders need to understand the benefits of stewarding their community's heritage through a channel such as an outdoor museum. In this way, leaders "must believe that tourism and other development activities provide sustainable benefits that do not sacrifice the integrity of a community's assets for greater marketability."¹⁴⁹ For the ECV, such advice could have prevented its current situation. Created specifically for tourism, the ECV was constructed at a historic place in a way that minimally damaged the site as a whole. Initially, the ECV did take great care to minimize the effects of construction activity that took place at the site. The integrity of the ECV site's land was impacted by the relocation of Shull House to the Native American site. The placement of

¹⁴⁷ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 60.

¹⁴⁸ Kimber Crane, ed., "A Position paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism." US Department of Commerce and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. 2005, 10.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 11.

the majority of the remaining structures on piers or partial basements reduced the amount of earth that would be disturbed by the activity. The most serious affront to the ECV site was its sale to the private owner.

The avoidance of damaging the integrity of the resource is, predictably, of utmost concern. Those who study heritage tourism note that local officials and stakeholders need to work together to “strike a balance between an optimal visitor experience and economic opportunity and the needs of the community to preserve and sustain its historic, cultural and natural resources.” The ECV was an endeavor by the city to capitalize on its historic resources as a means of economic development. It had the potential to be entrepreneurial. In this way, heritage was molded to conform to economic development.¹⁵⁰

The placement of the ECV on its historic site has preserved the layers of history that exist there. While it was in operation, the ECV provided an experience to visitors that brought them closer to their past through its heritage village. Those who visited the site in person were brought into an experience with the past that was tangible and learned through interpretation and the visible features of the site. This “experience theater” brought tourists through the site physically, but they also followed an intangible path as the non-visible aspects of the site were presented to them during the interpretive process.¹⁵¹ Success of a heritage place should be measured “not in numbers, but also in the integrity of the experience that contributes to the economic viability of the institutions, resources, community and its residents.” A cultural or heritage site is not able

¹⁵⁰ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 97-99.

¹⁵¹ Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 49.

to convey its history or message if its integrity is damaged in the course of its public operations.¹⁵² Today, the ECV's integrity as a heritage site is in jeopardy.

What can a future-oriented, emotional process such as nostalgia do for heritage work when examining a situation like that of Rome, New York? By acknowledging and validating the affective and nostalgic values that have come to connect the public with the ECV, historians, preservationists, and local leaders may be able to understand more fully the extent to which residents and past visitors have come to identify with the ECV on a deeply emotional level.

Presentation and Interpretation

There is the potential for tension between the needs of preservation and the presentation of historic events. A particular period might not correspond to the period for which the entire site is preserved or conserved. Identities are imposed upon these places, some of which have the potential to be misleading. How do we proceed, realizing that modern-day identities and meanings may alter the messages received by future audiences? Value judgements are argued to be critical (to be conserved at all costs), constant (with its character intact would be subject to change), and tradeable (can be exchanged in return for other benefits). There is also the importance of viewing heritage not only through the eyes of a visitor, but of politicians and officials "as a necessary defence against the degrading aspects of commercial heritage."¹⁵³ There are different audiences within the public that can benefit from a functioning ECV. Some of these

¹⁵² Crane, ed., "A Position paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism," 11.

¹⁵³ David Baker and Gill Chitty, eds., "Contexts for Collaboration and Conflict." *Managing Historic Sites and Buildings: Reconciling Presentation and Preservation*. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 6-8.

audiences include local or state historians, canal historians, military historians and heritage tourists. Presentation that can be seen as valuable to these audiences in addition to local residents and visitors would provide the best interpretation of the site in terms that a casual or a professional visitor would find meaningful and informative. The balance is to keep the heritage place as an asset to the community while remaining relevant and useful to visitors and community members alike.

A common component of an outdoor museum is the historic house, or house museum. The Erie Canal Village was constructed as a collection of house museums. These were used to display objects from the city's collection of donated and acquired objects. The historic house can potentially be either well done or poorly done. There is a concern that "misplaced quaintness"¹⁵⁴ can distort the message being conveyed. We shouldn't act like something that was done in the past was cute or unique—it was commonplace for that time and should be treated as such. Interpretation of historic houses and the objects displayed within them is key to the successful educational experience for visitors. Concepts like explaining hall-and-parlor houses to people who may only be vaguely familiar with the concept of parlors and the separation of public and private spaces "stress cultural change and transformation, and both use a combination of houses and furnishings to impress the dimension of this change upon the visitor."¹⁵⁵ The ECV did not have a famous former resident to focus upon. The result was that the history of each building was discussed, but the ECV overall presented a general interpretation of a typical canal-era village.

¹⁵⁴ James Deetz, "A Sense of Another World: History Museums and Cultural Change," In *A Living History Reader, Vol. 1: Museums*, ed. by Jay Anderson. (Utah State University: AltaMira Press, 1991), 121.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 122.

It is more meaningful to understand how the past has impacted the present. It is more important than explaining how people lived in the past and how it may or may not be comparable to how we live today. Therefore, those creating interpretive plans or employees doing the interpretation should strive to convey the impact of the past on the present rather than the vestiges of the past that remain within the present. Consideration towards interpretation and presentation may stress the importance of conveying the impact of cultural change versus similarities and relatability in today's life. A heritage place like the ECV could have its interpretation designed to highlight the impact of that contrived, yet representative "community" on our present society. Framing an illustration of a critical part of our past can be accomplished in a truly meaningful, educational, thought-provoking and immersive experience, but only with a proper plan for interpretation.

The interpretation of historic sites and/or outdoor museums has the potential to make or break the operation of the site. A well-run, stable site with poor interpretative processes may be only marginally successful. It depends on who one might ask, or if the museum is working towards fulfilling its mission. However, even if a poorly-managed, financially faltering site like the ECV were to have an effective interpretive process, it may be successful in its mission. Unfortunately, that site might not be able to remain in operation long. This was the fate of the ECV.

It has been said that "presentation has to serve two masters at once: the integrity of what is being presented, and the desire of customers for an intelligible product."¹⁵⁶ For the Erie Canal Village, the integrity of the land and its features were largely preserved but

¹⁵⁶ Baker and Chitty, eds.. "Contexts for Collaboration and Conflict," 11.

the integrity of the buildings was changed by their relocation. The buildings' relocations were acknowledged in local newspapers but may not have always been properly contextualized during interpretation to visitors. The desire of visitors was to obtain a better understanding of the history of the site, the heritage of the village, and their own pasts. The importance of engagement with the historic site is emphasized, as it draws a better response that favorably impacts future preservation of the site. It makes people truly care about the historic environment. By bringing the community together with its roots with a "presentation by record," the managers of these places need to ensure that through media, the past is appropriately presented to future audiences.¹⁵⁷ Future audiences could include older people who visit the site for nostalgic reasons or younger people who are curious to learn about history in an immersive experience.

Conflicting desires of the managers of an outdoor museum with those of the public may likely be the most challenging yet important aspect of preserving an historic environment.

A critical area around which debate, policy-making and training could focus is the number of tensions between preservation-led presentation—giving the people what the professionals have identified as worthwhile for them to see. Perception-led demand—what people want from the heritage-- which may only partly overlap with what is on offer, and may also include other different agendas.¹⁵⁸

Those managing the outdoor museum, then, must balance the desire of visitors to experience their community's heritage with innovative approaches to educational and interpretive processes. For the ECV, those tasked with managing the attraction were faced with presenting an authentic experience to the public. At the same time, they were

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 20.

under pressure to generate a profit for the attraction. The ECV operated at a significant loss for nearly every year that it was in operation. Visitation numbers did not generate the profits that were anticipated to sustain the ECV's operating costs, let alone allow for the resources needed for a formal interpretive plan. The lack of balance between the projected for-profit economic potential and the desire to offer a place for visitors to experience Erie Canal heritage undoubtedly caused its failure to operate successfully, leading to its sale and currently dire situation.

Interpreting the Erie Canal Village

The ECV was in operation for more than 40 years, and during that time it had a small but dedicated staff of both paid employees and unpaid volunteers. Two of the ECV's paid staff members served for decades each during that time. They were interviewed for the purposes of this study in order to gain insight into their understanding of the operation of the ECV.

The ECV's longtime curator, Mary Reynolds, began her time at the ECV as a volunteer in January of 1976, working in the Canal Museum and providing interpretation at the Crosby House. She worked there until November of 1999. She was not professionally trained in curatorial processes, but learned from her predecessor, Steve Wright, who left in 1980. She trained while on the job, as well as through professional workshops. Mrs. Reynolds fondly remembers the dedication of her coworkers and the volunteers that devoted countless hours to making the ECV an inviting, friendly place for visitors to come to learn more about history. She stated that there was never an interpretive plan, but that there were several retired teachers working at the ECV who did

their best to provide consistent interpretation to the public. Mrs. Reynolds and others who worked at the ECV took the time to write detailed histories of the buildings at the outdoor museum, including discussion of the objects on display within the buildings. These plans were developed for the buildings as they gradually arrived at the ECV.¹⁵⁹ Their histories of the buildings and their contents provide the only known written interpretive record for the educational aspect of the ECV. Mrs. Reynolds was very proud of the 4th grade program, which she developed, that brought so many schoolchildren to the ECV in the fall after the regular season for visitors had ended.

Michael Milewski began to work at the ECV in 1979 and stayed on until 2012. He was also not formally educated in interpretation. During his time at the ECV, Mr. Milewski was the mule driver for the packet boat ride, the blacksmith in the blacksmith shop, and caretaker of both the farm animals at the ECV but also of the property itself. Mr. Milewski is particularly proud of the interpretation he was able to provide while demonstrating traditional blacksmithing at the ECV. The packet boat ride, the star attraction of the ECV, was also a point of pride for his time of employment at the ECV. He noted the importance of first person interpretation versus third person interpretation, and felt that third person interpretation, which was provided at the ECV, worked best. The mission of the ECV, according to Mr. Milewski, was to tell people what the Erie Canal did for America and for history. “The public was so thankful for what we did for them,” he said.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Mary Reynolds, in discussion with the author, Mar 2018.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Milewski, in discussion with the author, Mar. 2018.

Perspective

To delve deeper into the immersive experience of the outdoor history museum, one could consider the affective aspect of visitors as they visit the site. Can visitors get a realistic, accurate experience here at the site? Do they care about the setting? For the ECV, the fact that its buildings were relocated was frequently part of the interpretation provided to visitors. The historical resonance of the setting was the single most important factor in the preservation of history at its site. The site's importance ties into the heritage aspect of the ECV.

Full-scale community re-creations are not fully representative of 18th or 19th century communities. The yards are far neater than those of the communities of the past that they are trying to represent, their crops are not representative of what would have been in front-yard gardens, and interpreters may spend days on end dipping candles only to re-melt the wax and just repeat the action for the next round of visitors.¹⁶¹ These displays create a forced image of the past.¹⁶² At Plimoth Plantation, for an alternative approach, interpreters are required to keep busy on tasks in which they get dirty and actually perform the tasks with an end goal. By creating a "reality" of a community from the past including the smells of farm animals, cooking and the sounds of people actually creating things gives visitors the "sense of the great and complex change that has marked the progress of American culture."¹⁶³ Farm animals were kept at the ECV and blacksmithing was performed. Its yards were indeed kept neater than would have been observed in the 1840s. The distorted "clean-and-sterile" approach says more about the

¹⁶¹ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 254-255.

¹⁶² Deetz, "A Sense of Another World: History Museums and Cultural Change," 122.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 123.

leaders of the heritage site than it does about the lives of the people from the past.¹⁶⁴ The reality of 19th century village life was presented at the ECV through the sights, sounds and smells of the activities that took place the property.

Authenticity and the Past

Authenticity may not always be easiest to define as an absolute, or a universally-accepted definition. The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), seeks to clarify what it means for a place to be considered “authentic,” especially when that definition needs to be in terms that are relatable to outsiders and to people from other cultures. In Article 4 of the Nara Document, for example, “the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.”¹⁶⁵ Further, Article 9 continued that “conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage.”¹⁶⁶ The values that are gradually assigned to heritage places such as the ECV develop out of the history represented and respected at the site. Several documents concerning authenticity were cited in an article by Herb Stovel, a professor of heritage conservation. The World Heritage context, created in 1976, argues that “authenticity is the ability of a property to convey its significance.” From the Riga Charter, “authenticity is a measure of the degree to which the attributes of cultural heritage credibly and accurately bear witness to their significance.” In this way, the ECV was remarkably successful in connecting with

¹⁶⁴ Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 254-255.

¹⁶⁵ Raymond Lemaire and Herb Stovel, ed., “Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994.” International Council on Monuments and Sites. Last accessed Apr. 28 2018. <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf>, 46.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 46.

visitors and celebrating its educational and interpretive efforts to explain the historical value of the layers of the site.¹⁶⁷

In an appendix of the Nara Document, one of the editors of the document suggests that increasing awareness of this fundamental dimension of heritage within the public is “an absolute necessity in order to arrive at concrete measures for safeguarding the vestiges of the past. This means developing greater understanding of the values represented by the cultural properties themselves, as well as respecting the role such monuments and sites play in contemporary society.”¹⁶⁸ There is a need for the meaning of the ECV in terms of its role as an authentic, heritage place, to be accepted and respected for these values, especially in light of its current situation. These qualities have developed out of the history present and presented at the site, because the significance of the site was interpreted and conveyed in ways that were—and still are—meaningful to the public.

According to Stovel, there is a continuing need to apply authenticity to sites that are understood as wholes, rather than just fragments of the sites.¹⁶⁹ A complex historic place like the ECV would need to be treated as a single, whole site. Its multiple layers could each be interpreted differently, but the approach taken to discuss and examine the cumulative effect of centuries of history that has occurred in this place should consider the entire ECV site a single, authentic heritage place.

David Lowenthal discusses the relationship and journey into the past that we as present-day people have with our history. We approach the past in several terms that help

¹⁶⁷ Herb Stovel, “Origins and Influence of the Nara Document on Authenticity,” *APT Bulletin: Journal for Preservation Technology*, (39:2-3, 2008), 11.

¹⁶⁸ Lemaire and Stovel, ed., “Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994,” 47.

¹⁶⁹ Stovel, “Origins and Influence of the Nara Document on Authenticity,” 16.

us relate to the past. Familiarity, for example, is to “render the present familiar.” This makes the past comfortable for us. Guidance explains that the past is invoked for the lessons it teaches us. He writes that “history taught morals, manners, prudence, patriotism, statecraft, virtue, religion and wisdom.” Such virtues and other positive attributes, when conveyed through an experience that brings us closer to our history, help to teach us more meaningful lessons about our past. He continues that “a well-loved past enriches the world around us.” In this way, embracing our past makes our present more real and fulfilling. Regarding the notion that heritage is a form of escape, he felt that “in art or in actual landscape, many sought out relic islands of epochs encapsulated from modern progress.”¹⁷⁰ Ideas like these can be applied to any historic place. In terms of the ECV, Lowenthal’s thoughts on revisiting the past as an immersive place enable the visitor to journey back to a safe, familiar, enriching experience as a “time traveler.” The comfort and reassurance of that place and time are “other” than our complex, unpleasant present.¹⁷¹

Saving the Outdoor Museum

How can these associations be used in order to “save” a struggling or dormant place like the ECV? If visitors grew up visiting a specific outdoor history museum on a regular basis and later brought their own children there, an association likely exists where they have formed an emotional or affective bond with that site. In this way, this type of situation may indicate a successful interpretive experience—the museum has come to

¹⁷⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 49.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 24.

mean something special to its visitors. These visitors may not realize that this connection exists until something happens that compromises the future of that site.

The ECV's location on the opposite side of the preserved Enlarged Erie Canal has physically distanced the ECV from the public view. Many people had no idea how neglected it had become until photos were made available on the internet, even though they drove past it regularly. While in operation, interpretative processes may have needed some improvement to keep the ECV more relevant for today's visitors. Financial management issues, a lack of building maintenance and the apathy of local leadership led to its decline and current situation. The city has distanced itself from the fate of the privately-owned ECV, further contributing to its near-dire situation. What can be done to correct and repair an outdoor museum that has suffered for decades, but remains historically and emotionally important to thousands who formed an emotional bond with the site?

The legal documents that should have protected the Erie Canal Village, its land and its artifacts have failed to do so. The ECV has not operated as a tourism facility as was stipulated in the Bargain and Deed of Sale for a period of more than ninety days. This should have caused the city of Rome to act on this reversion clause and regain control of the property long ago. This has not been done. The situation is currently so precarious that the two major private collections that spent decades educating visitors at the ECV have been removed from the property and re-donated to other institutions. This has been a great loss to the ECV, which can no longer provide guests with examples of early farming equipment, modes of transportation or examples of Harden furniture, all of which had been donated directly by Charles Harden in 1972. Nor can they see scale

models of boats, bridges, and canal structures, as this collection has also been removed. These objects and displays contributed to the heritage experience of the ECV. The historic structures that were relocated to the ECV site provided visitors with physical examples of canal-era architecture. The decades-long efforts of employees, volunteers, curators and donors brought the 19th century village to life. This was a deep, emotional investment with long hours of labor contributed to the ECV. Losing the Erie Canal Village will be a tremendous loss to generations of Central New Yorkers.

The need to preserve the buildings that are in danger is of utmost concern, especially in extreme cases such as the ECV. There are various steps and challenges that a preservation group faces when trying to intervene on behalf of an endangered historic property.¹⁷² While not ideal, a point may be reached where the elements of an outdoor museum must be salvaged to the extent possible to make the best of an unfortunate situation.

Resonance and Affective Relationships with the Past

People who visit historic or heritage sites may do so without a specific enriching goal in mind for the visit. This can be described as numen-seeking, or a desire for an affective connection with an earlier time. For example, they may visit a historic site with little to no knowledge of the historic event that occurred there, but they are not going there to learn about that specific event. They visit because they are seeking a deeper, emotional connection with a place that they choose to visit. This is a “deep engagement,

¹⁷² J. Myrick Howard’s *Buying Time for Heritage: How to Save an Endangered Historic Property* discussed the lengths that Preservation North Carolina had gone for preservation. Depending on each property’s circumstances, PNC was able to purchase, accept donation of, facilitate the resale of, or properly market endangered buildings.

sympathy or spiritual communion with the people or places of the past. To the extent that making such connections is a motivation for heritage tourism, very likely coexisting with other interests, needs and desires, the numen impulse needs to be taken into account with the public crafting of historical sites and museums.”¹⁷³ There is also the potential for some nostalgic feeling to play a part in the decision of a visitor to go to a particular historic or heritage place.

Nostalgia is a prominent component of the affective and emotional bonds that visitors may have assigned to a particular place. While nostalgia has the potential to receive a negative response as “melancholy for the unobtainable,”¹⁷⁴ there is also the promise that the effects of nostalgia can teach us more about the site and what it means—and does—to the people who care about that particular place. Also of interest is how that nostalgia is considered to be an emotion, and how that is used today.¹⁷⁵ Authors of an article in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* argue that “some studies of industrial and working class heritage, often in de-industrialised areas, rather than concentrating on despair and sorrow, harness emotional pain, memory and resolve to claim a meaningful role in the present, and justify hope for the future.”¹⁷⁶ This is a powerful statement when applied to the ECV situation.

It is argued in this treatise that the ECV became a heritage place due, in part, to the emotional distress and memories of Rome’s lost downtown. The promise and

¹⁷³ Catherine Cameron and John B. Gatewood, “Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past,” *Ethnology*, 42,1. (University of Pittsburgh; 2003), 57.

¹⁷⁴ Gary Campbell, Laurajane Smith & Margaret Wetherell, “Nostalgia and heritage: potentials, mobilisations and effects,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 23:7, 2017, 609.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 609.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 610.

optimism of the ECV presented a hopeful picture of the future for the city's residents, as well as others whose cities were also experiencing deindustrialization, urban renewal, and the loss of landmark historic buildings. Nostalgia, then, was a reaction and an attempt to overcome the challenges presented by those who were suddenly unable to identify with their own hometowns.

Numen is associated with effective site interpretation because it connects visitors to the past in an awe-invoking, personal and emotional way. To this end, the ECV may have been profoundly more successful than had ever been intended at the time that it was being planned and created. In seeking to capitalize on tourists and locals looking to learn about history, the ECV enabled these visitors the opportunity to create an affective connection with the ECV. This connection was able to last beyond the time visitors spent physically present at the site.

Visitors to heritage places are usually concerned with authenticity, at least to some extent. They expect to see period furniture and actors in costumes. They may not want to see buildings that are perceived as reconstructions, or they may wish to have interpretation provided for them. People who visit historic sites or heritage places are looking for what could be defined as a numinous experience. They want to go back and experience life from the past.¹⁷⁷

There are important questions faced by museum staff: can heritage sites and museums pick up where history lessons end? Can numen-seeking help in this type of public education and the affective bonds that occur as the result of the site's interpretation? People want to be educated about history that they find interesting, yet

¹⁷⁷ Cameron and Gatewood, "Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past," 67.

they do not want to be told what they should know. This way, numen becomes a truly personal heritage experience.¹⁷⁸ The ECV was able to provide this experience for its audience, and its success in doing so has led to its current predicament being a deeply emotional impending loss for many of its former visitors. Lowenthal asserts “History is for all, heritage for ourselves alone.”¹⁷⁹ History has meaning for everyone, but heritage has a meaning that is unique to each person that experiences it.

Shaping History

Interpretation and presentation are constructed by the leaders present at museum sites. With heritage places, there is an extent to which the actual story presented to the public can be manipulated. The new social history is the experience of life through the lens of the historic period depicted at a living museum. Connecting visitors with the past at the ECV was not something they could truly experience solely in their own terms. Someone had to begin the process of shaping that story, but a question arises: how far can this shaping influence the public? Heritage allows for present-day interpretation and approaches to examining our past. The recreated past does not ever speak for itself. “Museums that re-create historical communities do so more and more nowadays in ways that deliberately call attention to the relationships that individuals have formed with their fellows to enlarge their freedom of action and achieve more than they could have alone.” The museum, then, is a forum. Not an attic.¹⁸⁰ Living history museums are essentially

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 56-57.

¹⁷⁹ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 128.

¹⁸⁰ Cary Carson, “Living Museums of Everyman’s History,” In *A Living History Reader, Vol. 1: Museums*, ed. by Jay Anderson, (Utah State University: AltaMira Press, 1991), 31.

time machines that transport visitors to another time and another society. The visitors and the interpreters at the living museum “share” this history experience, or “collective consciousness” with one another.

Intangible Heritage

History at the ECV encompassed intangible heritage, tangible traditions and resources. Regarding intangible heritage, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett wrote “whereas like tangible heritage, intangible heritage is culture, like natural heritage it is alive. The task then is to sustain the whole system as a living entity and not just to collect ‘intangible artefacts.’” Intangible heritage can be considered to be the actions and movements of humans, as well as songs, dance or other forms of culture. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett felt that “these processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity.” Her argument was that dying culture needs designation, such as through UNESCO. Culture that is “vital” is thriving and is not in need of such protection. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s take on Plimoth Plantation’s synchronization of the heritage and historical clocks through continually rebuilding its buildings shows an extreme take on preserving the relationship of the site to the settlement it represents. She continued with a statement that disappearance should not be confused with “intangibility and evanescence.” She felt that museums are a way of “possessing” heritage, ironically, to maintain artifacts (within the museum) that represent the lost heritage and history that once existed outside of the museum. She feels that they are “agents in deculturalization integration,” and offers an optimistic future for museums

in that they can move forward differently.¹⁸¹ The discussion on permanence and preserving the relationship of the site to the settlement it was designed to represent can be continued with the ECV. The potential loss of its buildings in a way, presents the opportunity to examine the culture and intangible heritage represented at the ECV, as well as the history of the other layers present at the site.

Various intangible traditions took place at the ECV. Some examples included public memorial ceremonies, children's activities, Boy Scout events, reenactments of battles and seasonal festivities (Fig. 28). The operations of the ECV for the 40 or so years that it was open to the public strove to incorporate these and other various heritage and educational activities. By embracing 19th century life in a village of 19th century buildings, it can be argued that little was lost in terms of an authentic experience at the ECV despite its artificially assembled environment. "Proximity to the present makes heritage ever more relevant to, but ever less distinct from, today's world," Lowenthal wrote.¹⁸² An authentic village both was and was not experienced there. It was a product of the 1960s and 1970s and the "modern" approach to history tourism of that time, not truly of the time it represented and educated the public about. Simultaneously, the Erie Canal Village provided a step back to the 1840s as its period of interpretation, the 1970s in terms of its process of interpretation, and throughout its decades of operation, related both of those periods of significance to present-day audiences. Ultimately, authenticity or inauthenticity are both constructs of the present, and both played a role at the ECV.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as a Metacultural Production," *Museum International*, No 221-222, (Vol. 56, no. 1-2. 2004), 61.

¹⁸² Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 19.

¹⁸³ Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 164.

Sustainability

Unfortunately, all museums have the potential to be tremendously expensive to operate. Living history outdoor museums have increased costs due to building maintenance, care of livestock, salaries of employees and those tasked with assuring that interpretation is presented appropriately.

The ECV's operating costs usually were twice the amount of revenue it generated. Outdoor museums must be sustainable, and cannot feasibly be supported by massive municipal subsidies at taxpayer's expense. To combat overhead costs that have the potential to put the outdoor museum out of business, care and planning need to be taken to ensure that the museum can operate as it should for the future.

Unsuccessful or troubled outdoor history museums like the ECV provide examples of how not to approach and operate these types of sites. Decades of deferred maintenance on outdoor structures will result in the damage or loss of those structures. Reducing a marketing budget, for example, to allocate funds elsewhere will only hasten the decline of the site, as without marketing, visitation will likely decrease, exacerbating financial problems. It is possible to find new uses for a grouping of historic buildings, the original purpose of the buildings no longer being an option to preserve them.

There are the economic benefits associated with heritage tourism, but at the same time, there are also deep issues with heritage tourism. There is concern with the implications of the "commodification" of history. The ECV was a carefully crafted representation of a generic canal community that was meant to educate its visitors and bring them back into what was mostly a 1840s "historic village." The development of the Erie Canal Village may not have perfectly represented a typical 19th century canal



Figure 28: Winter Celebration at ECV, circa 1990. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

village, but the intention was to recognize the significance of the land in conjunction with the manufactured village setup. Overall, the placement of the ECV at its location has afforded protection to the archeological and other historic resources present at its site.¹⁸⁴

Cultural and heritage tourism are distinctly different from general “mass market” tourism strategies. It was argued that “many cultural and heritage institutions are nonprofit organizations where tourism is only one strategy that meets their mission. In many cases, funds are dedicated to an artistic or educational mission or the preservation, interpretation and management of a resource rather than to marketing.”¹⁸⁵ Tourism planning is essential not only in terms of creating realistic goals, but in protecting the community from the effects of increased traffic that may inadvertently lead to the damage of the cultural or heritage resource. The role of local business leaders in planning for the increased or potential customer base is also recommended, as is the availability of financial assistance for small businesses that are either directly or indirectly impacted by the resource.¹⁸⁶

There have been many outdoor living history museums constructed across the United States and throughout the world. What is it that made some of these become successful heritage places? Declining attendance at history tourism sites including house museums, traditional museums, and outdoor museums like Colonial Williamsburg presents threats to the futures of these places.¹⁸⁷ Sustainability is of the utmost

¹⁸⁴ Peter H. Brink, “Heritage Tourism in the U.S.A.: Grassroots Efforts to Combine Preservation and Tourism,” *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology*, Vol. 29, No. 3/4. Association for Preservation Technology International, 1998, 60.

¹⁸⁵ Crane, ed., “A Position paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism,” 3.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Tiedemann and Karen Marsico, “Declining Interest in History Hits Places like Colonial Williamsburg Hard,” *The Federalist*, Last accessed Apr. 28 2018,

importance for the continuation of these immersive educational experiences. New history enables leaders of a heritage place the opportunity to shape the place's historical image. This image is offered to the public through its interpretive process. Authenticity at heritage places is dependent upon the genuineness of the presentation of objects, buildings and the intangible elements of the historic place. Relocated historic or truly old structures should be noted as such, as should reconstructions. It is critical to explain authenticity to ensure that the "history" presented is truthful and realistic. Presentation and interpretation are essential elements of creating an affective and educational experience at an outdoor museum or heritage place. Presentation and interpretation also need to keep the outdoor museum relevant. Perspective is concerned with the point of view used in the interpretive process: is it better to interpret from the first or third person perspective? Heritage allows for the connection between intangible events and emotions to become tied to a physical place. Resonance means honoring that heritage, maintaining these bonds between visitors and their heritage place. This might mean that clarifications can be made for well-known historical topics in light of new primary sources that may be considered. The mission and stewardship of outdoor museums are the most basic elements for the leaders of these heritage places. They cannot lose sight of such concepts if these places are to persevere.

Is it realistic to believe that help may still come for the Erie Canal Village? How can a community be prepared for the impending loss of its heritage place? The history presented there was a reproduction of a village, built with old, authentic buildings. In this sense, authenticity is better defined as verisimilitude, or what is believably or credibly an

<http://thefederalist.com/2017/08/22/americans-declining-interest-history-hitting-colonial-williamsburg-hard-not-one/>.

1840s village.¹⁸⁸ The heritage that was formed there means more to the community than the buildings. This provokes another question—can intangible heritage truly live on beyond the structures that were associated with its creation? In a place like an outdoor museum, the full impact of the place’s heritage needs to be defined.

Reconciling History and Heritage

History and heritage are sometimes approached as one, but can also be separated into two distinct concepts. How does the separation of these ideas factor into the discussion of a complex historic place? David Lowenthal approaches history and heritage as being discrete from one another. History is the past. Heritage clarifies the past in order to make it relevant to the present. In examining the ECV site and its layers, history and heritage will be present and presented. No place is one dimensional.¹⁸⁹ The layers of the Carrying Place, the Forts, the First Contract and the Canals are historic layers at the site. The layer of the ECV attraction is historic in terms of mid-20th century nostalgia and economic development. The ECV layer possesses a strong association with heritage. Lowenthal continued that “to neglect heritage is a cardinal sin, to invoke it a national duty.”¹⁹⁰ This component of heritage is manifested in the ECV’s decades of operation as an outdoor museum that brought both Romans and tourists to this historic and heritage place. The events that were held at the ECV drew generations of visitors to immerse themselves in an “authentic” 1840s canal-era village. The ECV as an outdoor museum

¹⁸⁸ Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 151;159.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Todd, *The Thing Itself: On the Search for Authenticity*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 79.

¹⁹⁰ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, XIII.

allowed visitors to step back in time and place themselves in a community that thrived as a result of the Erie Canal's tremendous economic success.

Heritage, as it makes the past relevant in the present, was the key activity taking place at the ECV. It may not have been explained in this way, but that may be due to the common combination of history and heritage as a single concept. The ECV represented heritage that was relatable as Rome's past, but also as the past of the Mohawk Valley and the entire Erie Canal corridor. Recently, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor was established as a National Historic Landmark. The ECV was a representation of that heritage prior to the ECNHC's designation. The Erie Canal's remarkable success and its role in America's westward expansion were funneled through Rome. There is the potential for Rome to take advantage of funding, programming or other incentives to appropriately recognize the city's part in national transportation history as New York celebrates the bicentennial of the Erie Canal. Regardless of the way in which the ECV was created or managed, or even of its eventual fate, the ECV was able to successfully engage hundreds of thousands of visitors in the years that it was in operation.

Heritage as a present-day representation of the past has the potential to be shaped to offer a particular view of the past, potentially skewing that history. The ECV was guilty of creating a village that never was, with buildings that were never near each other prior to their relocation to the ECV site. Edward Bruner argues that each "expression of cultural heritage is a copy in that it always looks back to prior performances."¹⁹¹ Beyond this, the ECV strove to combine the stories of the buildings relocated there and create a narrative describing a "typical" Canal-era village. This blending of the buildings'

¹⁹¹ Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 161.

histories and the presence of the layers of the Erie Canal's history at the ECV was a generalized representation of Erie Canal heritage.

Through research conducted thus far, it is apparent that the assembly of the ECV was seen by the public as a means of presenting the Erie Canal corridor's history and heritage in a single place. One could speculate as to the future that may have awaited the buildings if they had remained in their original locations. In some cases, the purchase or donation of the buildings provided an opportunity for extensive repairs, such as in the case of the Merry and Weeks Cheese Factory (Fig. 29). Relocation of the Cheese Factory allowed for the preservation of a part of Sherrill's history that was simply in a different place. The Maynard Methodist Church, for example, was being replaced by a modern church in the early 1980s. If the ECV had not existed and provided an avenue for donation and preservation, what would the fate of this 1839 structure have been?

Richard Todd argues that "in the act of trying to save the old from destruction, we are asserting our lack of connection to that world."¹⁹² By trying to keep "the old" in our today, this action, in a way, underscores the disconnection of our present-day lives with the past we wish to keep ties with. Avoiding the destruction of an old building and relocating it to a new place for it be able to continue to exist, is an example of this. The connection of a building like the Church to its original site and original use will have been drastically changed by its relocation. In a sense, the change or loss of that original connection is highlighted through the interpretation of the building in its new setting. The circumstances under which that original connection is no longer extant are explained to visitors and become a part of its history. Yet, the recognition of that altered connection

¹⁹² Richard Todd, *The Thing Itself: On the Search for Authenticity*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 87.

is able to continue through the interpretation provided at the heritage village or outdoor museum as the building still stands at that place. The heritage of the congregation of the present-day Maynard Methodist Church continues to exist in the 1839 building at the ECV. The Church, like many others at the ECV, is falling into serious disrepair. The heritage of the ECV site and the ECV itself, are under threat as the entire property continues to be neglected.

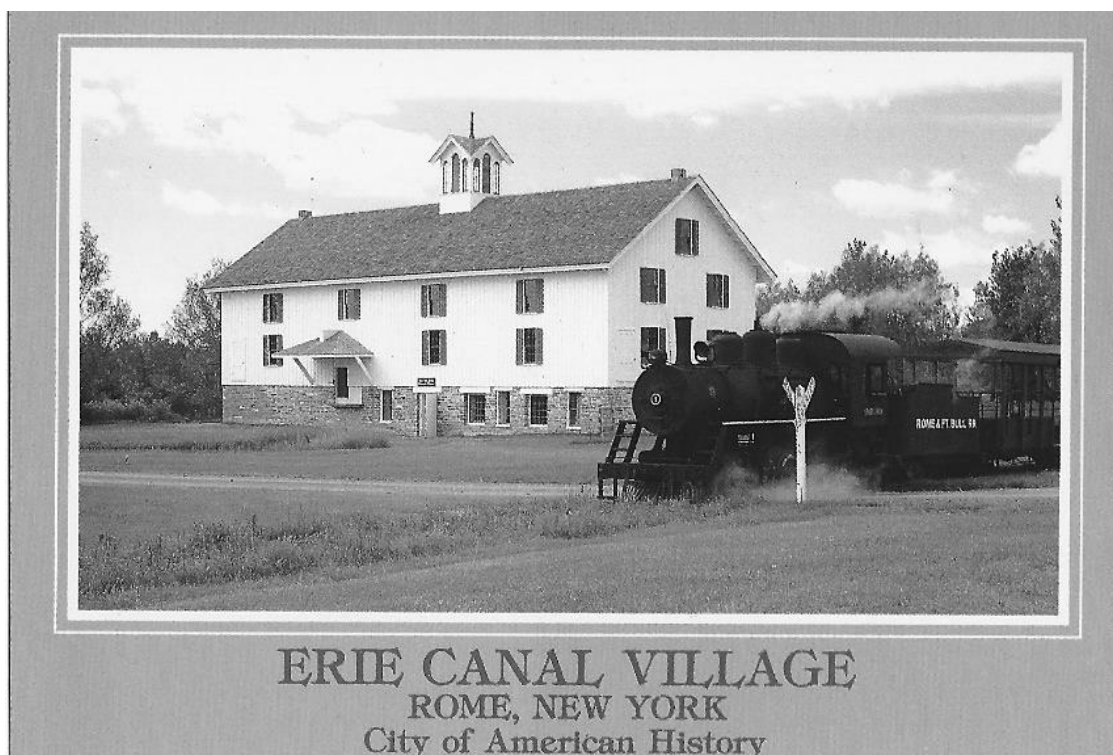


Figure 29: NYS museum of cheese postcard with the city's slogan. Undated. [Source; <http://nyfarm.blogspot.com/2013/06/june-is-dairy-month-flag-day-means-rome.html>, undated].

Protection of a Layered Site

The historical layers at the ECV site are threatened through the potential for active disturbance of the earth or existing features. Yet, they continue to be protected by

the continued existence of the buildings of the ECV. The buildings present at the ECV are not as fortunate, as “benign” neglect will continue to claim structures. Sold fifteen years ago after maintenance had already been long-deferred, repairs were minimal up until approximately 2015. Since that time, when management of the ECV changed again, very little has been done for the structures. The disagreement between the city and Railstar over the artifacts has delayed the presumed initiation of repairs at the ECV. Further, the city’s repeated removal of the drainage culvert providing access to the majority of the ECV buildings prevents vehicles from being able to approach the buildings. This historical layer of the ECV site is in the most immediate danger, as decades of neglecting wooden buildings that are up to 200 years old will soon result in their complete loss. The location of the ECV was chosen due to its proximity to transportation-related aspects of the site. These transportation aspects existed because of the general geography of the area, primarily that of the Oneida Carrying Place.

Interpretation of a Layered Historic Site

The presentation of a given historical place is subject to multiple factors that may influence its interpretive plan, if such a plan exists. The presence of multiple layers at the site present a challenge in how the entire site is interpreted. Using the example of the ECV, an administrator or manager of the site would be faced with not only attempting to address each layer present, but also how these layers interact with one another. In the timeline of the ECV site, is a clear progression in the use of this small area of land as part of the Oneida Carrying Place and everything that has developed at the site more recently. Therefore, the need to link each layer of the site’s transportation history to one another is

essential. The remnants of the Carry Road run through the ECV site, explaining the presence of the prehistoric Native American site, now located beneath Shull House. The later layers of the site, the Forts and the Canals, are located where they are because of the Oneida Carrying Place's critical importance as a transportation route. The Carry Road's route through the ECV property was not clearly marked, if the route was indicated at all. "The earlier in time one goes, the more people were directly linked with their environment, so that such disciplines as paleontology and geology are essential to the proper understanding of life in the distant past."¹⁹³ The recognition and direct, pointed interpretation of this layer of the ECV site is imperative because its presence resulted in the later accumulation of *all* of the subsequent layers.

The interpretation provided for historic buildings, structures, or other features of the site is relatively straightforward if these elements are in their original locations and states. The more altered these elements have become, the more complicated the process becomes. When the components of a historic place have been relocated or altered, the interpretive process becomes all the more critical. Without the intact integrity of location that links the structure to its site, how that element is addressed during the interpretative process changes.

Authenticity is a key component of any historic place. Reconstructed or assembled historic places like the ECV face a challenge in successfully creating an "authentic" place. The way that the ECV was assembled has created the way that it is viewed by the public.¹⁹⁴ The interaction of visitors with components of an outdoor museum may or may not be affected by inauthentic exhibits, depending on their

¹⁹³ Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 31.

¹⁹⁴ Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 141.

presentation and the interpretation provided for these objects. There is a need for a formal interpretive plan to address concerns regarding integrity and authenticity.

The process for interpreting multiple historical layers at a single site, particularly one coping with concerns regarding authenticity, relies upon the recognition of all layers as they relate to one another. Each layer could and should be delineated and addressed independently but the broader relationship of all layers must be retained and included in discussions concerning any layer. Would any of the layers be present at the site if it were not for the geographical feature of the Oneida Carrying Place and Wood Creek? Was this reason for the ultimate location of the ECV attraction discussed with visitors?

The historical layers of the ECV site contributed greatly to the decision to place the outdoor museum at this location. David Lowenthal states that “History is the past that actually happened, heritage is a partisan persuasion.”¹⁹⁵ Heritage, in this way, can be a construction of the way that the historical elements of a place are presented to the public. Whether or not all layers and their relationships to one another were adequately addressed at the ECV while it was in operation, going forward, the layers should be considered together to demonstrate the significance of the entire ECV property.

¹⁹⁵ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 102.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATING SIGNIFICANCE

In order to continue the process of determining which layer or layers has the best potential to save the ECV site, it is critically important to consider the implications of evaluating the historical layers. This chapter will give further consideration to the application of the National Register Criteria for the Evaluation or the application of the most recent version of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013, to the layers of the ECV site. The layers of the ECV site will be discussed as they relate to one another, with suggestions for their preservation, repair, or other intervention.

The Practice Note “Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance” was written to elaborate further on the information discussed in the Burra Charter. The Practice Note states that “A place may have multiple aspects of significance and these may or may not be interdependent. The process of assessing cultural significance should include defining the tangible and intangible attributes that embody each aspect of cultural significance.”¹⁹⁶ This approach to recognizing each aspect of a place’s significance can be applied to the layers of history present at the ECV.

The ECV became a place where people would visit to embrace heritage, attend events, and learn about their history. The ECV attraction is the only layer at the site that was added in recent memory, and is the only layer for which people involved with its creation may still be around to talk about it. No particularly defining event occurred at the

¹⁹⁶ “Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance: A Practice Note on The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, Version 1: November 2013,” Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites, http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf, 5.

site other than those that occurred before the ECV was created. Nonetheless, the ECV was, and still can be, a place where people go to experience their culture and heritage. In this way, it will be argued that the ECV is a traditional cultural property. Its status as a traditional cultural property will be discussed in terms of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (NRCE) and its related National Register Bulletin.

The ECV was created nearly fifty years ago. Its intended purpose was to be a place where people came to experience heritage tourism as a form of entertainment. In addition to the target audience of out-of-town visitors, local residents reeling from the loss of nearly all of their downtown were able to experience local history at this site. Major public events were held at the ECV, in addition to educational programs and the interpretation of the buildings and artifacts on exhibit. Local audiences were able to come to the ECV to participate in these kinds of activities. Such ties between residents and the cultural experiences that took place at the ECV contributed greatly to the heritage aspects now associated with the ECV site. In this way, the ECV became a place where intangible cultural heritage occurred.

National Register Criteria

The NRCE is problematic, and the ECV situation illuminates the limitations of this system. The National Register Bulletin for a Traditional Cultural Property discusses such a property as a place where “a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.... Traditional cultural values are often central to the way a community or group defines itself, and maintaining such values is often vital to maintaining the group's sense of

identity and self respect [sic].”¹⁹⁷ Documentation for a traditional cultural property should discuss the visible and non-visible aspects of the place. Its present-day appearance can be documented, but the traditions, events, and uses of the place in the past should not be omitted.¹⁹⁸

The National Register’s definition of a site is "the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure."¹⁹⁹ The NRCE reads, in part:

Ordinarily.... structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria...²⁰⁰

Considering Criterion A, the “association of a property with significant events, and its existence at the time the events took place, must be documented through accepted means of historical research. The means of research normally employed with respect to traditional cultural properties include...folklore studies, as well as historical and archeological research.”²⁰¹ The layers of the ECV site that could fall under Criterion A would be the location of Fort Bull and the First Contract of the Erie Canal as both were

¹⁹⁷ Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King, “National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties,” National Park Service, Revised 1998, 1-2.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 20.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 11.

²⁰⁰ "National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” National Park Service, Last accessed May 12 2018, https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm.

²⁰¹ Parker and King, “National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties,” 13.

singular events that occurred on the property. Similarly, Criterion C, section 1 “applies to properties that have been constructed, or contain constructed entities—that is, buildings, structures, or built objects.”²⁰² The visible constructed layers of Clinton’s Ditch and the Enlarged Erie Canal could potentially qualify under this criterion.

Under Criterion D, “Properties that have traditional cultural significance often have already yielded, or have the potential to yield, important information through ethnographic, archeological, sociological, folkloric, or other studies.” This criterion’s archeological component would cover the location of Fort Bull as well as any remaining evidence of the Native American site beneath Shull House. “Generally speaking, however, a traditional cultural property’s history of yielding, or potential to yield, information, if relevant to its significance at all, is secondary to its association with the traditional history and culture of the group that ascribes significance to it.”²⁰³ This particular statement is exceptionally applicable to the location of Fort Bull. Documented to have been in the immediate area of Fort Wood Creek, adjacent to the ECV site, Fort Bull brings significance to the ECV site despite its precise location remaining a mystery. In the absence of archeological evidence of Fort Bull’s precise location, the ECV and its canal layers still function as a traditional cultural property. Generations of Romans and other locals whose ancestors worked on the canals, visited the Fort sites, and later attended the ECV have assigned value to the site. This value is not dependent upon archeological evidence of Fort Bull, but concrete evidence would provide validation that the property is a physical resource—another layer of history, in this case—capable of being properly documented.

²⁰² Ibid, 13.

²⁰³ Ibid, 14.

If “a property has lost integrity as a possible traditional cultural property, it may retain integrity with reference to some other aspect of significance.”²⁰⁴ There is an aspect of significance, particularly in the unquestionably significant layers of history embodied at the overall site. The property would still need to be evaluated using the NRCE, and it would need to be eligible under one or more of those criteria. Under Consideration B, relocated properties are generally believed to have lost their integrity because the NRCE wishes to preserve properties in place as significant living parts of their communities. The integrity and possibly the significance of the property are, to a high degree, embodied in its location and setting. In most cases, particularly outside of a building’s period of significance, the integrity of a structure is lost once it has been moved. The association of place between the structure and its original location is severed once relocation occurs.²⁰⁵

Regarding modification, “a property may retain its traditional cultural significance even though it has been substantially modified, however. Cultural values are dynamic, and can sometimes accommodate a good deal of change”²⁰⁶ Further, a property may be defined as a "site" as long as it was the location of a significant event or activity, regardless of whether the event or activity left any evidence of its occurrence. A culturally significant natural landscape may be classified as a site, as may the specific location where significant traditional events, activities, or cultural observances have taken place.”²⁰⁷ The Oneida Carrying Place was, and is, a natural feature of the Greater Rome area. The Carry Road ran through the ECV property, and the discovery of the Native American site near Wood Creek at the southern edge of the ECV attraction is evidence of

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 12.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 15.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 12.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 11.

this long-used natural landscape feature as it relates to centuries of human activity at this particular place.

Regarding the age of the ECV in comparison to the other layers present at the ECV site, the ECV's buildings are the most recent additions to the property. This is problematic for establishing the ECV as a traditional cultural property. When evaluating a potential traditional cultural property, Consideration G states that

Properties that have achieved significance only within the 50 years preceding their evaluation are not eligible for inclusion in the Register unless 'sufficient historical perspective exists to determine that the property is exceptionally important and will continue to retain that distinction in the future.' This is an extremely important criteria consideration with respect to traditional cultural values. A significance ascribed to a property only in the past 50 years cannot be considered traditional.²⁰⁸

In this way, the ECV would not be considered to be a traditional cultural property due to its age. The ECV may still be a cultural place, but cannot yet be categorized under the NRCE for traditional cultural property designation. It can be argued that the property is considered as important because of the historic layers that make up the site.

Historically Important Land Area and Easements

The National Park Service may be able to consider the ECV site as a historically important land area following the confirmation of the in-progress Fort Wood Creek State Historic Register application.²⁰⁹ A historically important land area is defined by the NPS Technical Preservation Services:

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 17.

²⁰⁹ The Fort Wood Creek property, owned by the Rome Historical Society, was nominated for the State and National Registers of Historic Places by the Fort Bull Research Group, a small group of historians who care for the Fort Bull/Wood Creek property on behalf of the Rome Historical Society.

A historically important land area must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Historically important land areas include either independently significant areas, including any related historic resources, that meet the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation, or land areas adjacent to a property individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, where physical or environmental features of the land contribute to the historic or cultural integrity of the historic property. Common examples of historically important land areas include traditional cultural places, archeological sites, battlefields, and historic cultural and designed landscapes.²¹⁰

The successful listing of Fort Wood Creek on the State, then National Registers of Historic Places would effectively be able to make the case for the land surrounding the listed site, in this case, Fort Wood Creek, to be designated as a historically important land area. Further, the battle that resulted in the destruction of Fort Bull could further categorize the ECV site—as a historically important land area—in relation to its military and battlefield history. The cultural value of the land adjacent to the listed site would be defined, and hopefully, protected, as a result of this kind of determination.

The Burra Charter

The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013, was created in Australia to set a standard of practice for managing and conserving cultural properties of all types, including historic places with cultural values. These places of cultural significance are

²¹⁰ “Easements to Protect Historic Properties: A Useful Preservation Tool with Potential Tax Benefits,” National Park Service Technical Preservation Services, 2010, Last accessed Dec. 19 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/easements-historic-properties.pdf>.

considered part of the historical record, expressions of the community's identity.²¹¹ The Burra Charter recognizes that change is sometimes necessary to keep a place usable and to care for it. While it allows for minimal alterations to occur at a place, the Burra Charter is most concerned with allowing the place to retain its meaning and cultural significance. In this way, the Burra Charter is more flexible in allowing a place of cultural significance to have undergone some change over time while still recognizing that the original meaning and association with the place still possesses value for the community. Identifying the value of the place is done through a process of evaluation.

The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy. This is the Burra Charter Process.²¹²

The conservation of the place needs to have a compatible use and an appropriate setting. "This includes retention of the visual and sensory setting, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place."²¹³ Maintaining the view shed of the property of cultural significance is also part of the conservation process.

Drastic changes to the property of cultural significance such as demolition, new construction or other intrusions are not appropriate. The Burra Charter does accept that the removal of non-original buildings or relocated structures may at times be appropriate. This could potentially occur at the ECV if Shull House were

²¹¹ "The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013," Australia ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites, 2013, 1.

²¹² Ibid, 4.

²¹³ Ibid, 4.

removed in order to uncover the Native American site beneath it. Taking an action such as removal or demolition “should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance.”²¹⁴ If such a structure contributes to the cultural significance of the place, then it should be retained. “Change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place and its use should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.”²¹⁵ Any changes that may potentially reduce cultural significance should be reversible. The undoing of any change to the place should be carried out as soon as possible.

Conservation, interpretation and management of the place should allow members of the community the chance to visit and experience their cultural place. If there is conflict regarding the values present at the place—or layers, with the ECV site—recognition and respect should allow for the continued existence and experience of all values.²¹⁶ The Burra Charter states that “emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.”²¹⁷ In this way, the Burra Charter would not support the removal or concealment of any layers of the ECV site. Preserving, restoring or reconstructing part of a property of cultural significance would be considered appropriate if doing so would ensure the visibility and survival of portions of the cultural place.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 5.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 6.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 6.

Reconstruction on its own may be considered appropriate if the place had been damaged or altered in a way that affected its cultural significance.²¹⁸

The relationship between the community and its cultural places is paramount. Significant associations between people and a place should be respected, retained and not obscured. Opportunities for the interpretation, commemoration and celebration of these associations should be investigated and implemented.... The cultural significance of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by interpretation. Interpretation should enhance understanding and engagement, and be culturally appropriate.²¹⁹

To this end, a property of cultural significance like the ECV site should be accessible to its community and have an interpretative process. The opportunity to experience and celebrate the place's values should be provided.

Community members, such as groups and individuals "should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in identifying and understanding the cultural significance of the place."²²⁰ In the past, Romans were enthusiastic volunteers at the site, and this could be re-ignited. Proposed changes should be evaluated in terms of the statement of significance of the values of the cultural place. Disturbing the earth for archeological excavation, for example, should only be performed minimally. This should be done to obtain vital information or to protect a resource that is about to be lost, provided that it is in accordance with the management policy of the property of cultural significance.

Finally, the Burra Charter states that any items removed from the cultural place, "including contents, fixtures and objects, should be catalogued, and protected in accordance with its cultural significance." Significant items, if at all possible, should be

²¹⁸ Ibid, 6-7.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 7-8.

²²⁰ Ibid, 8.

kept at the place. For the ECV site, this means that the buildings and their contents should be kept on the property.²²¹

Most importantly, the Burra Charter holds that the “conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.”²²² In this way, the Burra Charter would recognize the multiple layers at the ECV site as all being important, and would not contribute to an argument where the selection of less than all of the layers were to be conserved. There is the allowance that there can be varying degrees of cultural significance for each value, which may lead to different treatments for the conservation of the entire cultural place.

Which Layer has the Best Potential to Provide Protection?

The layers present at the ECV site have been examined in depth earlier in this treatise. They will be briefly discussed here again, as consideration will be given to making a determination for the survival of the entire site, with all layers being addressed. The level of significance assigned to each layer will also be reiterated.

The continued existence of the ECV provides the most protection for the other layers present at the ECV site. If the buildings continue to stand in their current locations, the archeological resources that may be present below the surface are afforded their best chance of remaining undisturbed. The other layers of the First Contract, Clinton’s Ditch and the Enlarged Erie Canal might have been incorporated appropriately into an interpretive plan at the ECV attraction, but no interpretive plan existed. The historical

²²¹ Ibid, 8-9.

²²² Ibid, 4.

layers of the ECV site may have been left in place, unchanged, if the ECV had not been established at this place. Alternatively, they might have been damaged, developed or lost. An operational heritage village, outdoor museum or historic tourism attraction would likely ensure the continued existence of the canal and archeological layers. If the most critically important layer present at the ECV site is determined not to be the ECV, then which one could it be?

The oldest layer present at the ECV site, the Oneida Carrying Place, is both the simplest layer to discuss as well as the layer with the least amount of known documentation. Used for centuries, if not longer, the portage of the Oneida Carrying Place enabled Native Americans to travel west while taking advantage of the natural, navigable (and semi-navigable) water resources. Trade between native peoples, and later with Europeans, was possible because of the relatively short portage of the Carry. The Carry was utilized for the establishment of forts such as Fort Oswego and Fort Ontario. The WILNC's Rome Canal and later, the earliest construction on the Erie Canal, would cut across the Carrying Place, finally creating a single, easily navigable water route to facilitate transportation east and west across the state. The Carry Road passes through the ECV property, although its exact path through the ECV was not delineated during interpretive activities at the ECV attraction. The Carry represents all three levels of significance—local, state and national.

The next layer to be discussed is closely related to the Carrying Place. The Native American worksite, discovered when archeologists were ruling out the location of Fort Bull, is another pre-European layer that highlights the importance of the site on the Carry. The fact that this layer was able to be documented and briefly investigated is at once

fortunate and unfortunate. The hastily-made decision to place Shull House on the site led to the then-curator to reach out for help, and the archeologists and students who could volunteered their time to document what was found there. On its own, the Native American site possesses local and state significance. It also is likely to hold a different kind of significance to the local Native American population whose ancestors worked at the site many years ago. The way in which this particular location at the ECV site was treated is unfortunate. However, its contribution to the overall site, especially concerning the Carry Road's route through the ECV site, is able to provide evidence for some of the resources at the ECV site that are no longer visible at the surface.

The undetermined location of Fort Bull represents the 18th century military history of the ECV site, in conjunction with the adjacent Fort Wood Creek property. Even though the exact location is still a mystery, the fact that Fort Bull is present in or around the ECV site is significant. Currently in the application process for listing on the New York State Historic Register and National Register for Historic Places, the Fort Wood Creek property, once listed, will begin to bring focus to the importance of the ECV site as it relates to French and Indian War history. It is unknown exactly where Fort Bull was located, but it was in the immediate vicinity of the ECV and Fort Wood Creek. The unconfirmed location of Fort Bull, and the graves of those who perished when it was destroyed, should be more than sufficient for an argument to preserve the entire property without disturbing the soil. It is also the layer most likely to be associated with the possibility of locating human remains at the ECV site. The presence of documented

human remains on the property can contribute to the significance of a traditional cultural property.²²³

For purposes of addressing each layer present at the ECV site, I will separate the three elements of the Erie Canal and discuss each briefly here. Ultimately, these three elements combined as a single layer will also be discussed. It will be argued that these three Erie Canal-related features should be considered as the largest and most significant layer at the ECV site.

Based on previous discussion regarding the levels of significance—local, state or national—the presence of the site of the First Contract for the commencement of construction on the Original Erie Canal could provide the national level of significance needed to protect the entire ECV site. The economic impact of the Erie Canal extended far beyond the limits of Rome and the State of New York. What is particularly important about the First Contract is that it is not the site that is commonly recognized as being the place where the Erie Canal began on July 4th, 1817. That site, the Ceremonial First Dig, has been developed over and is roughly located beneath a 20th century building and its adjacent parking lot. The Ceremonial First Dig was attended by a few important individuals, and few accounts of that event are in existence. The First Contract was also not well documented, but it marked the initiation of construction of a phenomenally important engineering marvel. The First Contract is overgrown from nearly a century and a half of disuse, but one could visit this location. It is part of the ECV attraction, partially incorporated into a hiking trail. It is not known if it is still marked, or if its precise

²²³ Parker and King, “National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties,” 17.

location was part of the interpretive process that took place at the ECV during the four decades it was in operation.

With the ECV closed to the public, there is little recognition of the history and values present at the ECV site. For the most part, a casual passerby may not even notice the ECV, the canals or any other features of the property. There is a roadside marker on the adjacent highway indicating the presence of the First Contract. The speed limit on the highway is posted at 55 mph but the sign can be read if standing on the shoulder of this highway. The Erie Canalway Towpath Trail runs between the Enlarged Erie Canal and the highway. Those traveling on the trail are too far from the roadside marker to be able to read its message indicating the presence of the First Contract at the site. There is documentation placing the location of the Fort Bull waste weir, which was built for the Enlarged Erie Canal, near the site of the First Contract. While there is a sign near the waste weir and the ECV indicating the location of the First Contract, it is not easily visible to either pedestrians or to motorists. The lack of adequate recognition of the First Contract at the ECV site is unfortunate, but could easily be rectified by better signage.

Clinton's Ditch, or the Original Erie Canal, opened a transportation route through the Carry, and ultimately, the interior of New York State. Goods that once had taken about a month to be transported across the widest part of the state could now be moved in about a week at a fraction of the cost of transporting the same amount of goods over land. The Erie Canal enabled the rapid movement of people, supplies, and investment across New York and into the Great Lakes region. Cities like Buffalo, Chicago, and Detroit prospered as a result of the trade opportunities created by the success of the Erie Canal. Buffalo became a major transshipment point at the great lakes. New York City became

the financial capital of the world. The success of these cities, linked by the Erie Canal, enabled the United States to develop on an accelerated scale during the 19th and early 20th centuries. People traveled the Erie Canal as they moved westward and began to settle the Mid-West. Would westward expansion have been possible without the first version of the Erie Canal? This layer of history at the ECV site possesses local, state and national significance.

The Enlarged Erie Canal at the ECV site would present an argument similar to that of Clinton's Ditch. The enlargement of the Original Erie Canal increased the amount of traffic that could travel on the Canal. This would also represent a layer with national significance. In a local sense, the Enlarged Erie Canal present at the ECV site represents the only version of the Canal that passed through the city of Rome and provided it with the economic benefits that had already fueled the prosperity of so many other villages, towns and cities along the Canal. Using the Enlarged Erie Canal as the argument for the protection of the site would also possess all three levels of significance—local, state and national.

The three Erie Canal layers of the ECV site should be considered as a single layer for this discussion. This layer could be able to provide an argument for the protection of the entire site. Each of these three Erie Canal layers provides local, state and national significance. All three, then, should provide the same argument for the ECV site. To eliminate confusion with the other layers to be discussed, the three Erie Canal layers will be referred to as simply "the Erie Canal layers" for the purposes of this chapter.

The final layer present at the site to be discussed would be the ECV itself. The ECV represents a 1960s and 1970s approach to presenting and interpreting an 1840s

canal-era settlement on a site with many layers of history present. It was an attempt to “search for the mass of underlying currents that make up a culture,” as Schwarzer spoke of in *Myths of Permanence*. In a similar way, the ECV strove to define the bygone days of Erie Canal-era economic prosperity. The real histories of the buildings moved to the ECV in the 1970s and 1980s were recognized individually, but also combined to create a “typical” 1840s canal village. In this way, the “history” presented through the ECV and the interpretive process that may have existed there is both authentic and inauthentic. The effort of the HRDA in its creation of the ECV was part of a larger movement, a search for “the real America” in light of demographic and industrial change and as the nation anticipated its bicentennial.²²⁴

It is, however, the only presentation of “history” at the ECV site that is actively remembered by thousands of past visitors and employees who experienced it in their own lifetimes. The ECV was an example of a community that came to identify it as a place it valued, “even if such places have been dismissed by heritage professionals...while connections between people and places may change due to community displacement or access limitations, social value may also grow over time, and places having social value may gain historical value.”²²⁵ This historical value can be defined when discussing the ECV as a 1970s interpretation of an 1840s canal village, which in itself is a history of the 1970s. The feelings and association represented in the ECV connects people living today

²²⁴ Mitchell Schwarzer, “Myths of Permanence and Transience in the Discourse on Historic Preservation in the United States,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, (Vol. 48 No. 1. Sep. 1994), 3.

²²⁵ Holly Taylor, “Recognizing the Contemporary Cultural Significance of Historic Places: A Proposal to Amend National Register Criteria to Include Social Value,” US/ICOMOS, 2016, <http://www.usicomos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Taylor.pdf>, 2.

with a part of the past that they can remember and until recently, were able to visit.

Could it be that the amount of support from thousands of living people who experienced their history—in various ways—is what can create the opportunity to save the ECV site from neglect, amateur archeology attempts, and encroaching development?

The ECV is a place of cultural significance when viewed through the lens of the Burra Charter Process. This approach allows for changes over time and the flexibility of the place of cultural significance to adapt in order to ensure its continued existence. In contrast, the ECV would not qualify as a National Register traditional cultural property due to its age being less than fifty years old and would be a ground-breaking argument to make as the first property of this type. The planning stages of the ECV began in the late 1960s, the attraction opened in 1972, and therefore, the ECV is nearly fifty years old. It may be considered to be eligible for the National Register Criteria for Evaluation's fifty-year significance threshold. Potentially, to tie the relationship of the ECV as a representation of a transportation-centered community to the ECV site's much longer history as a place where nearly all east-west transportation activity was funneled, the age of the ECV could be considered much older than just the forty-six years that the ECV attraction has stood there.

Implications of Choosing One Layer of History to Preserve

If a determination is made that one of the layers is to be preserved as a priority, there may be complications from that decision. If, for example, the Erie Canal layers are named as the reason that an intervention takes place, what is to become of the ECV layer of the site? If the unknown location of Fort Bull is the reason that someone comes

forward to save the site, what of the ECV in that situation as well? A military history-focused intervention might not be as concerned with the Erie Canal layers, as the two canals restrict access to the fort(s) behind what is currently the ECV. The possibility of filling in those canals—and in the process, damaging the condition of the First Contract—would make it far easier to access the area surrounding Fort Wood Creek. If a Native American group steps in to save the site and is primarily interested in recognizing the Oneida Carrying Place and the Native American worksite, what would become of all of the other layers that have accumulated at the ECV site in the last three hundred years? There may not be an easy answer to any of these questions. Deciding how to proceed may also not be an easy task.

In the United States, the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the treatment of historic places has four official interventions. These are preservation, restoration, reconstruction and rehabilitation. None of these can really address what is needed at the ECV today in terms of a one-time intervention. The buildings could be restored or rehabilitated, but then would require long-term preservation. Again, determining how to proceed with saving the ECV through the National Register Criteria and Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment is not straightforward.

Removing One or More Layers in Order to Preserve the Chosen Layer

If an intervention becomes available that recognizes the most important layers of the ECV site to be anything other than the ECV attraction, what could be done with the buildings? If a building is in poor condition and beyond the point of reasonable repair, demolition is likely. Assuming that the buildings can be repaired, relocation—which

brought them to the ECV decades ago—could be a possibility. Where could these buildings go? Would the people and communities that donated those buildings forty years ago be willing to take them back? Would there still be a place for them? Who would pay the relocation costs? What if the places these buildings came from didn't want them anymore? Would their stories end at the very place where they were revered for so long? There are so many questions that arise when considering the possibility that the ECV will be drastically changed in a way that part of the site's history and/or its heritage is lost.

The ECV provided an alternative experience for those seeking to step back into the past, as many historic homes and commercial buildings lost in the 1960s and 1970s were gone forever. As a cultural place for social, cultural and educational events, the ECV did not “dilute the preservation mission ... rather, it integrate(d) a much-needed dimension of culture into our fifty-year-old definition of significance.”²²⁶ Can a heritage place be created, dismantled, and still mean something to the people that visited it? How does the experience of a cultural place and its significance change when parts of it are stripped away?

Looking at the ECV as a place that was created about 130 years after the time it was meant to represent, one may ask how long the ECV attraction was intended to exist. “As a means of historically representing American identity in built form, historic preservation philosophy continues to reflect underlying antagonisms between the myth of permanence and the concepts of progress and present-mindedness embodied in the myth of transience.”²²⁷ Progress created the need for a historic tourism attraction in light of the

²²⁶ Ibid, 3.

²²⁷ Schwarzer, “Myths of Permanence and Transience in the Discourse on Historic Preservation in the United States,” 6.

decline of Rome's manufacturing industry. The creation of the ECV was meant to take visitors back in time while celebrating the heyday of the Erie Canal, but for how long?

The implication of choosing one, more than one, or anything less than all of the layers to preserve the entire ECV site presents a problematic situation. How, as historians and preservationists, can we allow any pieces of our history to be removed, concealed, or damaged in order to give other pieces of our history a chance to survive? Is heritage triage the future for such an important place? Public support could lead to an intervention that is able to provide an economically stable administration and operation for the ECV. The recognition of the inestimable historic value of the ECV site could lead to the involvement of governmental or state authorities.

Conflicting Layers of History

There is some conflict between the layers of history at the ECV site. Some layers do not interact with one another, or perhaps they do, but in a way that does not seriously affect the other layers. The Erie Canal layers prevent access to other layers, and Shull House damaged the Native American site. What can be done with layers of history that negatively impact one another? For some, the damage has been done, and if care is taken, such damage may not be made worse. Measures can be taken to reverse the damage done to some layers, while some parts of some of the layers have managed to escape damage or neglect in a way that detracts from their state and significance.

Process for Mitigating Potential Harm in Preserving Other Layers

Regardless of what is ultimately decided to be the reason for intervening in the ECV situation, anything less than the intention to preserve all layers will have a direct impact on other layers. The same process used to determine the “chosen” layer or layers of the ECV site to preserve should also be used to evaluate the determination of which layers to conceal, or how to mitigate harm to the layer(s) not chosen. All of these layers are expressions of social “remembering,”²²⁸ so how do we as historians and preservationists proceed in selecting which layers to keep? A decision made and enacted today will forever impact the future of the site.

Reversing the harm done at the ECV site in regards to unauthorized, amateur attempts to excavate the earth to locate Fort Bull is likely not possible. Damage done when the buildings were set on newly-constructed foundations is not known to have uncovered significant resources, and since most of the buildings were located further from Fort Wood Creek, little mitigation may be necessary or even possible.

To play devil’s advocate, consideration should be given to what could happen to the layers at the ECV site in a worst-case scenario. The ECV buildings could be removed and their foundations filled in or taken out. The canals could be filled in. Soil could be added atop the current ground level, although there is the possibility that that could insulate the archeological resources present from further non-professional attempts to excavate and search for Fort Bull. Such measures could present the least destructive, marginally reversible opportunities to conceal the non-building parts of the ECV site for future reclamation. Provided, of course, that there be absolute prohibition on soil

²²⁸ Geoffrey M. White, “Introduction: Public History and National Narrative,” *Museum Anthropology* 21:1. 1997, 3.

disturbance and construction activities on the property—a prohibition that was respected. The removal of Shull House could allow for additional, more thorough investigation of the Native American site that was located where the house now stands. It is possible that there are remaining artifacts to be discovered, although they have likely been displaced by the excavation that took place prior to and for the purpose of reassembling Shull House. At the very least, the removal of Shull House would allow for the opportunity to place a marker or exhibit in its place. Such an exhibit could be dedicated to recognizing and interpreting the Native American site with its connection to the Oneida Carrying Place and the Carry Road, which ran through the ECV site.

Continuity and Change

Is there a possibility that multiple layers of history may be interpreted with consideration to continuity and change, without competition among these layers in the spirit of the Burra Charter Process? The ECV presented the history of its layers and to some extent, adjacent Fort Wood Creek, in terms of a continuous narrative of transportation history through the site. The First Contract was discussed, Clinton's Ditch marked with signs, and the Enlarged Erie Canal was kept watered for the replica packet boat to provide rides to visitors. Fort Wood Creek, commonly and confusingly referred to as Fort Bull, was cleared of trees for a time, but then was neglected until it was completely overgrown. Military reenactments were held at the ECV, bringing the history of the Forts to life for visitors. 1840s village life, as portrayed through the lens of the 1960s and 1970s, was presented amid these existing historical layers. The historic importance of the site was the original reason for the decision to place the ECV at its

location, but once that determination was made and the ECV was in operation, those layers of history were incorporated into the tourist attraction. The existence of these tangible elements of Rome's historic past helped to give some level of legitimacy to the newest and least authentic historic layer of the ECV site.

When in operation, the ECV enabled interpreters and visitors to immerse themselves in the past with a timeline of historical events all around them. There was no singling out of the "most important" historical period for the ECV site. All layers were presented (although perhaps not the Native American site under Shull House) together, demonstrating the passage of time at this single place. There was little indication given that there was significant conflict between the historical layers. For the most part, these layers avoided having "tensions that emerge as institutions attempt to give narrative form to the collective past."²²⁹ Rather, the layers were celebrated together as a single experience about different aspects of local, state and national history.

Continuity and change were noted by the explanation of the transportation and canal layers at the site. Nonetheless, the change of transportation methods from prior to the 18th and until the 20th century were incorporated into the message of the ECV's interpretive staff. Here, at the ECV site, the Oneida Carrying Place, Wood Creek, the Rome Canal,²³⁰ Clinton's Ditch and the Enlarged Erie Canal told the story of a growing nation and the technological developments that opened it as a pathway to the west. The area that eventually became the city of Rome was a vital transportation corridor, and

²²⁹ Ibid, 6.

²³⁰ This included the Western Inland Lock Navigation Corporation's (WILNC) Rome Canal, which was the canalization of Wood Creek at the turn of the 19th century. Wood Creek just bypasses the ECV property to the south, for this reason, the WILNC's role in the canal history of Rome was not discussed in this study.

here, at the ECV, the story of the evolution of inland water transportation in New York State could be told at a single location.

The construction of the ECV was an indication of a different kind of transformation. Changing times had reassigned the priorities of local leaders, causing them to make choices that removed part of the city's past in the hopes that modernization would improve the future of their community. Creating a profitable tourism attraction would, it was believed, improve the economy of this struggling Rust Belt city. The continuity represented in the ECV was that "The City of American History" would have created a place for history to be experienced and celebrated. A collective history from the point of view of the buildings, just one of which was from Rome, represented a then-modern way to experience history. The idea that "collective memory needs to be anchored in visual monuments,"²³¹ illuminates the need for a community to identify with its built environment. The stories of the buildings continued through their relocation to the ECV, allowing the places they came from to connect a part of their communities' past with the ECV. Presumably, these buildings would have been able to survive indefinitely at the ECV if they had been cared for appropriately.

The nationally significant aspects of the ECV site's layers—the Erie Canal layers and the Forts—would arguably be simple to preserve in a more optimistic situation. Repairs to the Fort Bull waste weir and the culvert at the western end of the Enlarged Erie Canal section could stabilize water levels in that canal. Little intervention may need to be done to care for Clinton's Ditch. The careful removal of mature trees and other vegetation that have consumed this canal over the last 180 years could prevent trees

²³¹ Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996) 154.

uprooting and damaging the remaining prism. This channel has decreased in size due to farming activity and general disuse of Clinton's Ditch since it was bypassed by the Enlarged Erie Canal in the 1830s.

In conclusion, the discussion regarding the determination of which historical layer at the ECV site will be best able to afford protection to the other layers is complex. The ECV site's past as a critical transportation corridor has placed pre-European history, 18th century Colonial military history, 19th century transportation history and 20th century tourism layers in a complicated, but still largely intact historic place. The evaluation criteria of the National Register for Historic Places and the Australian Burra Charter assign different levels of significance and meaning to the layers of the ECV site. The Burra Charter grants a property of cultural significance the ability to adapt over time to changes that allow for its continued existence, and this appears to be the most appropriate evaluative process to apply to the ECV site.

Without local authorities taking steps to protect the ECV site, as they have the legal opportunity to, it is unsettled as to what will become of the ECV site and its many layers of history. "One of the challenges in studying national narratives is that they are commonly situated at the intersection of local communities and (inter)national flows of culture and politics."²³² It is an unexpected irony to contemplate how to protect such a complicated place with nearly all of its layers associated with a national level of significance, when the layer best able to protect the entire site is simply a locally significant place.

²³² White, "Introduction: Public History and National Narrative," 4.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

Historical layers such as those at the ECV site are essentially moments in space, space being both time and a place. Many things have occurred at the site, and the remnants of those events, projects, or associations stay with the site. These layers do not have to be visible at all times to be interpreted, appreciated, and protected. Some layers, like the ECV attraction, are more visible than the site's older layers.

The buildings of the Erie Canal Village attraction are threatened with demolition by neglect. The remaining section of the Enlarged Erie Canal is in need of maintenance, primarily for the waste weir, circa 1860, that controls the water level. Referred to as the Fort Bull waste weir, this structure had new wooden components added to replace those that had deteriorated when the structure was completely restored in the 1960s.²³³ It is once again in need of repair. Due to dislodged stones over one of the arched openings on the south side, excess water from the Enlarged Canal section passes into the waste weir and out into a ditch that leads back into Wood Creek. The section of Clinton's Ditch and the site of the First Contract for the Original Erie Canal's construction are overgrown. The undiscovered location of Fort Bull has led to invasive, destructive attempts at amateur archeology to find it. A Native American site on the property was briefly investigated before a relocated building was added to the heritage village and placed directly on top of it. The site of the Erie Canal Village's location at the end of the Oneida Carrying Place, used for centuries of Native American and later, European transportation activity, is largely unrecognized. The remaining cultural landscape of the Oneida

²³³ "Project for Tourism: Restoration of 125 year old Waste Weir Presents Problems," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Sep. 23 1967.

Carrying Place is soon to be largely affected due to encroaching development from the north. The southern and eastern viewsheds of the Carry and the French and Indian War fort(s) have been left largely intact due to the undesirability of development near a shallow creek and large swamp.

After decades of deferred, or at best, minimal maintenance, the buildings of the ECV are showing signs of deterioration with repairs needed that may no longer be feasible to complete. Failure to maintain the buildings rendered most of them condemned years ago, and the condemnation of buildings at a heritage village and museum attraction has contributed to the ECV's failure to open to the public for more than two years. For a brief time after the buildings were condemned, visitors could still enter the property and walk around the grounds but could not enter the buildings. Impending development is already beginning to carve portions of the ECV away.²³⁴ The mule-pulled packet boat, the most beloved feature of the entire ECV attraction, has been out of commission since 2011.²³⁵ It has been neglected for years, rotting (Fig. 30), on the bed of the Enlarged Erie Canal that it traveled for decades to the delight of thousands of visitors, primarily schoolchildren.

Restoring the various historical layers of the ECV site will be a costly endeavor, in terms of skilled labor needed to repair the historic buildings and structures, time

²³⁴ The city of Rome retained ownership of the ECV's parking lot at the time it sold the rest of the property to the private developer. The city has begun the process of alienating the parking lot—designated as parkland—so that it can lease the two of the parcels that make up of the parking lot to the Humane Society of Rome. The Humane Society intends to build a 13,000 s.f. state-of-the-art animal shelter on the property, directly adjacent to the Enlarged Erie Canal section of the ECV. This building will be very visible from the ECV. The SEQR process is ongoing for this project as of May 15, 2018.

²³⁵ Steve Jones, "California Dreamin' About Canal Village," *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Apr. 19 2011.



Figure 30: The damaged *Chief Engineer of Rome* packet boat sits on the bottom of the Enlarged Erie Canal at the ECV, Jul. 26 2017. [Source; Rome Daily Sentinel, 2017].

needed for so much work to be done, and likely a staggering financial investment. Such an undertaking, however, would be critical to begin to return the ECV back into a safe, functioning, educational and accessible outdoor museum and heritage place. This would enable the interpretation of the ECV to begin again, and for new generations to be able to experience this complicated but extremely important historic place. The potential for reopening the ECV would resonate throughout Rome and beyond, as thousands would be able to visit and possibly form new affective connections with the site. Looking back at what has not worked in the past in terms of drawing large numbers of visitors, new programming could further engage new audiences with the ECV and the land it occupies.

The Bicentennial of the July 4th, 1817 initiation of construction of the Original Erie Canal—Clinton’s Ditch—passed last summer without recognition. In late July of 2017, the city of Rome held a symbolic reenactment of the Ceremonial first shovelfuls of the Erie Canal’s construction. This ceremony did not take place at the site where the Ceremonial shovelfuls were actually turned, as that site has been developed over and currently is comprised of a building and a parking lot. The ceremony also did not take place at the site of the First Contract, where work began on the actual construction of the Erie Canal on July 4th, 1817. Instead, Rome’s 2017 Bicentennial ceremony was held at Bellamy Harbor, a park on the 1905 Barge Canal. It was not held close to the correct date of the anniversary, but rather was planned to coincide with another summertime festival. This was a powerful statement on the disconnection between the city of Rome and in recognition of its historical role in the shaping of the United States.

Some of the layers of the ECV site possess national significance. This national level of significance is assigned to the site’s layers of transportation history from pre-

Colonial to modern times. These layers include the Oneida Carrying Place and the Carry Road, First Contract, the sections of Clinton's Ditch and the Enlarged Erie Canal. The Erie Canal layers are indicative of American technological and economic achievements that made Westward expansion possible in the 19th century. The Oneida Carrying Place, a natural landscape feature, allowed for transportation and trade to move east and west across the portage for centuries before Europeans arrived in what would become New York State. The Oneida Carrying Place featured prominently in the French and Indian War as communication and supply routes for British forces depended on this sole east-west water route linking Fort Oswego to eastern fortifications. Except for the forts that would later be built upon the Oneida Carrying Place to protect it, the closest British fort to Oswego was that of Fort Herkimer, a considerable distance to the East. For a brief time, Fort Wood Creek and the site of Fort Bull were the westernmost occupied components of the British Empire in New York.

The ECV and its role as a heritage place is the only layer of the site that does not hold national significance. The state and local significance associated with the ECV are based upon the ECV as a mid-20th century attempt at capitalizing on historic tourism. In a strange twist, this is the layer that can afford the most protection to the entire site, including those layers possessing national significance. Despite the ECV's precarious situation, there is an opportunity for the city of Rome to legally retake the property due to a reversion clause that was included in the 2002 sale deed for the ECV to the private owner. There is hope that the city will finally decide to act upon this opportunity and will take the first step towards saving this part of the history of Rome, New York State, and the United States. What, then, is preventing the rescuing of this complicated historic site

with so many valuable layers? What can be done to argue for the preservation of this property that is now being faced with newer, more aggressive threats that will forever alter its cultural landscape?

Discussing the importance and significance of the nationally significant layers present at the ECV site is an approach that may strike a chord with the right person or organization that would be willing to devote the resources needed to intervene (Fig. 31). The most serious problem facing the ECV site is that the least significant layer—at least in terms of local, state, or national significance—is the layer that is able to provide the entire site and the remaining layers with protection. The ECV, if operating as intended and as stipulated at the time of its sale fifteen years ago, would provide the most desirable protection to all layers of the site. The history of all layers could be interpreted together as part of the attraction, allowing all layers to exist in their current states and with hope of the improvement of the buildings of the ECV.



Figure 31: Clipping from the front page of the Rome Daily Sentinel. Nov. 30 2010. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, 2010].

Further, the city's ability to act on the reversion clause would allow for the locally significant layer of the ECV site, the "least" significant layer, to preserve the entire site. It is understandable that the city may not be willing to assume the responsibility and costs

associated with running the ECV again, after decades of losing so much money while doing so. One approach is to act on the reversion clause and resell the property to another private individual, or offer it for donation to a nonprofit organization or a state or federal agency. The city and other heritage tourism entities should recognize that the locally significant layer is capable of providing the best protection for the broader and higher profile layers of the site. The entity that has the legal grounds to act to save the site should be encouraged to do so as an interim measure.

I conclude that the flexibility and approach of the Burra Charter Process provides a more effective framework for understanding the ECV and its layers of history than the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. As a traditional cultural property, those with affective connections to the ECV are aware of the intangible cultural value of the site, as well as the still-visible historical features of the property. The concept of a traditional cultural property is narrowly framed, unfortunately, within a system of evaluation that excludes or discounts the relatively recent past. Approaching the ECV as a heritage place recognizes the important, emotional connection between members of the public and their identities. This heritage place came into being at the same time that Rome was losing its downtown, and for this reason, resonates more deeply with the people who worked at and visited the ECV while it was in operation.

Recognizing the ECV as a heritage place located at a historically complex site as opposed to focusing on the ECV as a failed tourism attraction, casts a new light with which local officials may be able to better understand how much the ECV meant to so many people, and for so long. Choosing to act to save the ECV from its current situation does not mean that the city would be making the same mistake in attempting to run an

outdoor museum heritage village as an economic development venture. Rather, choosing to save the ECV would be accepting the ECV as an emotionally important part of the heritage of Rome. The ECV as a heritage place has become part of Rome's history. For the city that up until recently had promoted itself as "The City of American History," nothing could be more noble than to take the opportunity it has at hand, and to give this important portion of its identity and the hearts of its citizens another chance to survive.

The Oneida Carrying Place has existed for hundreds of years. Fort Bull, wherever it is, was built a little over 260 years ago and it has not been precisely located. The oldest Erie Canal layers of the site have been there for two hundred years. The ECV has stood for about 45 years. There is still the chance for these layers to exist for future generations. I believe that if we promote the importance of the nationally significant layers, attention will be paid to the ECV's plight that will encourage interest in the situation and all of the historic layers. This approach will provide the chance for financial and other resources to become available to save the ECV. A focus on the heritage of the ECV, especially when trying to reach out to local officials who are in a position to make the decision to act upon the reversion clause, gives these key players in such an important, significant place a point to stand on. This provides the opportunity to achieve something incredible. Should the city choose to act and take back the ECV, the city and its officials would be able to say that they did what was best for their city and its citizens. They would truly be able to say that they saved the pieces of national history that occurred within their city. Could any career achievement be greater than that?

Factors to Consider

This treatise has focused on Rome's Erie Canal Village site as a case study. How can the discussions that have taken place regarding the ECV be of benefit to other places? There are undoubtedly other sites with layered history. As with any historic site, the people who protect and care for the site do so with the realization that they are entrusted with carrying on the legacy and story of their historic place for a time. As long as the place survives long enough to be passed onto the next generation, stewardship is gradually handed on to a new group of people to ensure the continued existence and care of the historic place. These stewards may be administrators, managers, nonprofit organizations, property owners, local officials, and/or concerned citizens. When those sites become threatened, the stewards of those places could be faced with having similar conversations and making similar decisions as those regarding the ECV in the hopes of protecting their community's valuable historic place.

One of the main goals of this thesis was to enable stewards of similar sites to examine their complicated historic places to determine which aspects of the site can be used to make the best argument in order to save the place. Is the newest layer the strongest argument, simply because there may still be living people who remember the event that transpired there? Is the oldest layer the most significant, simply because it has been there longer? What about the most high profile layer, the one that is most famous? Or the layer that is not visible above surface level, but that most certainly is located on the site's property? What about the layer that has the potential to yield the discovery of human remains from a war fought at the place centuries before? The consideration given to complicated questions such as these lead us to reflect on what parts of our history

matter most to us, and how we must brace ourselves to cope with the results of our decisions. The decisions made regarding our history today will forever affect our future.

The prioritization of what matters most to us as historians and preservationists today has the potential to affect the way that a site is interpreted, preserved, or unfortunately, lost. As stewards of these places, and those that our neighbors frequently turn to when a historic place is in danger, making a decision regarding which layer or layers should be used to argue for the need to preserve the place is not an easy one to make. Even if the layer that is determined to be the most important, the one to name when speaking about why the place needs to be preserved, is obvious, how can we begin to justify the flip side of that statement—how do we address the issues surrounding the layers that were not chosen, and by default, are determined not to matter as much?

Choosing between the layers of our history regarding their significance to us, today, has the potential to irreversibly affect the preservation and continued existence of the other layers in the future. Therefore, this is not a decision to be made lightly. If a choice is made to preserve a layer that conflicts with the others because that is what is needed to save the entire site, can addressing or mitigating the conflict between this chosen layer in the name of site preservation be done in such a way that it could be reversible in the future? The choices that we make today will directly impact the historic places that future generations are entrusted with for the time that they are the stewards of these places.

The implications of the way we respect, evaluate, and act upon the values for our historic places and all of their layers resonate beyond our present-day situation and our immediate response to threats facing these sites. The Burra Charter is a process for doing

this. Such critical evaluations should be done in a way that will allow the opportunity for a fair interpretation of the layers and the historic sites decades from now. For example, the failure of the ECV heritage village to live up to the expectations set as far back as the 1960s may make some officials in 2018 want to forget about the ECV. How fair is that, then, to younger Romans who still wish to experience history in their hometown? What if the economic situation shifts and some new possibility arises to make the ECV a viable heritage place once again? How fair would it have been to simply allow the ECV to fade from existence because it symbolized failure in one aspect of its existence, decades ago?

As an economic development tool, the ECV was not successful. As an outdoor museum and heritage village that educated thousands of visitors about a view of 1840s life on the Erie Canal, it succeeded. As a heritage place for a city of people who were at a loss for how to embrace their history in light of three devastating phases of urban renewal, the ECV presented an option for them. This last concept was likely not planned by those who created the ECV in the first place. The 1960s attempt to “modernize” the city’s economy by introducing historic tourism had also introduced the very urban renewal activities that had created the need for a heritage place by demolishing the heart of the city.

When heritage, an intangible concept, is presented in an exhibit like the ECV, has the ability to resonate more deeply with the community and individuals who can speak up for the preservation of that place, how can that be reconciled with physical layers of the past? Weighing intangible heritage in comparison with the tangible historic layers of the place can be a challenge. The heritage element of the ECV resonated differently for Rome than it did for those who visited from outside of the city. The ECV had tangible

and intangible heritage, an assumed role as a cultural place, and visible and non-visible historic layers. Arguing for the ECV as the layer best able to provide protection and preservation for the other layers makes the case easier for interventions at the ECV site.

What about other historic places where intangible layers of the site may not be as intertwined with tangible or physically identifiable layers of the site? Does closeness in time affect the decisions made about these places—if there are people alive who remember an event or association with the place, does that layer automatically become more practical and relevant because the present-day connection with this part of the past is more relatable? Collective memory is also a factor. Romans whose ancestors worked on the construction of the Erie Canal as well as on the Canal itself still live and work in the city. Some have spoken out against the bleak situation at the ECV because for them, the ECV represents something more than just tourism and class trips.

The Burra Charter process should be used as a model in a parallel manner as the official United States categories of significance and limited approaches of treatment of historic sites. An evaluative process such as the Burra Charter recognizes that in order for some places to endure the passage of time and still remain in existence, minimal changes will have to take place. More stringent criteria, such as the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, are more specific in determining what type of association with a property renders it significant. The Secretary of the Interior's Guidance for Treatments regarding preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation seek to ensure that the historic place that remains in existence for the future is in the most pristine state possible.

Recommendations for Further Research

Heritage places are sometimes not easily recognizable as discrete places, or layers. This may become problematic, as an intangible concept may be a little too abstract for some community members to easily be able to articulate what the place truly means to them. A building or natural landscape feature may possess qualities of aesthetic beauty. A famous historical figure may have visited the historic place, contributing a layer to the site that while not visible, is still easy for community members to imagine and relate to. For others, talking about the value of heritage places may be more difficult to express. People remember how a place made them feel. They remember what they experienced there, and what event was being celebrated or commemorated. Facilitating discussion that makes it easier for conversation about memories that were made at that place can help community members articulate why the historic place matters to them. Research that examines the intangible aspects of heritage places, particularly as this relates to historic preservation and complicated historic places, would be beneficial for future study on the subject. Additionally, the concepts of numen, nostalgia, and collective memory would also be of interest in further studies on the preservation of complicated historic places.

Another recommendation for further study would be to examine Rome's tourism efforts in terms of planning, development and social history as urban renewal was used as an opportunity for what would later be known as heritage tourism. More research into the establishment of assembled villages during this time and the relationship between



Figure 32. ECV in August 2017. [Photo by author, 2017].

urban renewal programs and heritage programs also merit further exploration. A fuller understanding of the context of the ECV's development suggests its history is of interest, as well as its role in local heritage.

A discussion of the layers of a complicated site in terms of which one layer or layers have the best chance of preserving the site is not an easy one to have. When talking about the interaction of physical layers of a site, there is the possibility that these layers can conflict with one another. Coming to terms with the realization that some layers may have harmed others over time as events transpired forces stewards and communities to seriously consider whether or not to actively attempt to remedy past damages. Is it better to leave layers in conflict with one another, as this conflict has already become part of the history of the entire site? Interpreting continuity and change as a part of the evolution of the site can help to contextualize layers, and possibly explain why one layer is chosen over another for preservation. What kind of statement would be made, both today and to future generations, if one layer was decided to be more important than another as would be evidenced in any measures taken regarding one or more of these layers? This would be an interesting pursuit for future research.

With the identification of a single layer or multiple layers that can be used to try to save an endangered historic place, there will be layers that were not recognized as being "the" layer. How can these other layers still be appreciated, their value recognized, and their interaction with the chosen layer be placed in context? There is a downside to choosing one layer over others, as this will need to be reconciled with concerned community members, some of whom may be unhappy with such a determination. Studies devoted to the application of new technologies for pinpointing the location of no longer

extant, or less than complete man-made features, would also contribute to the discussion.

Coping with any decision that is made regarding a complex historical or heritage place will necessitate difficult discussions with the public. Perhaps the layer they are most connected with or the one that they feel should be most important is not the chosen layer. It is important to be able to have these types of conversations with community members as well as with local officials. A determination of this sort is likely not discounting or dismissing any of the other layers that were not chosen, rather it is highlighting the one with the most potential to afford protection to the entire site. Constructive dialogue concerning a determination of this sort may inadvertently appear to detract value or meaning from unchosen layers. Research on how to enable local officials, community members, and preservationists to better understand one another's reasons for having feelings and associations for such a place could prove quite valuable in terms of the endangered historic place being discussed at the moment, as well as for future places that may become threatened.

Historic places must be protected today, and will be entrusted to future generations tomorrow. Threats will arise, and with luck, be addressed with minimal harm done to the historic place. Sometimes, adaptation is necessary for the continued survival of the historic place. Both evaluative methods considered in this study are valid reflections of the kind of past we want to pass on to the next generation. At what cost, then, is it for a historic place to be considered ineligible for consideration for Register listing if the place has undergone centuries of relatively minor alterations? An in-depth discussion and comparison of these two evaluative methods as they relate to the real-world protection of valuable, complicated historic sites would be of great value to many

slightly-altered historic places. Future research could examine which situations should require the most rigid application of National Register Criteria for eligibility, and which should be allowed the flexibility of the Burra Charter approach. Additionally, research could explore the possibility of using both approaches to obtain the fullest understanding possible for how to proceed. This would be the responsibility of the officials acting on behalf of municipalities, private owners or others acting as the stewards of the historic place.

An especially important and challenging topic for future researchers to address would be to investigate how advocacy can be used to encourage local officials to act in the best interests of their community when doing so would mean having to address a past failure. Simply acknowledging the existence of the historic place is the first step for local officials to take in regards to addressing the issues facing the historic place. It is difficult to believe that there are instances where the existence of the historic place is flat-out denied. When the mayor is quoted in the local newspaper as saying that “there is no Erie Canal Village,”²³⁶ for example, what can the community do to try and encourage intervention to save the place? How can a place be saved when it is not even recognized as existing by the entity that once ran the place, when it very clearly is an actual physical place that can be visited? The ECV’s location is still advertised on directional street signage around the city. Helping a community cope with a past failure concerning the site begins the process of evaluating what the resource meant then, means now, and what it

²³⁶ Steve Jones, “City focus on development 2018,” *Rome Daily Sentinel* (Rome, NY), Jan. 3 2018. romesentinel.com/rome/city-focus-on-development-in-2018/QBqqIC!Ko1U1kzvZZVHRkTSIFvMw/.

can still mean. When the municipality holds the best opportunity for intervention that can result in the saving of a historic place, but also has difficulty addressing or even admitting that the place exists, the community becomes frustrated because the place that mattered so much to them does not appear to matter at all to their local leaders.

Moving Towards Hope

Despite the dire situation currently facing the ECV, there is still the possibility that an intervention may take place. This could even occur in enough time to save some of the buildings. The ideal future for the ECV would be a change in ownership of the property, transferring it to someone with an appreciation for all of the historical layers of this complicated place, the dedication to make it happen appropriately, and the resources to undo decades of neglect. A massive infusion of money would be needed, as well as a considerable amount of skilled labor to repair the buildings, footbridge, and the waste weir. The culvert that has become so problematic in preventing access to the ECV for maintenance and easement access to the Rome Historical Society's Fort Wood Creek property will likely need to be replaced by a bridge, so this would also need to be constructed.

Once stabilization has taken place in regard to the structures of the ECV, a new packet boat could be built (Fig. 30) and the ECV's star attraction could once again be operational, providing visitors with a unique canal experience (Fig. 32). A narrow-gauge steam engine could also be placed back into service. New mules would be needed for the packet boat ride, an interpretive plan could be developed for the outdoor museum and buildings that are able to be repaired. Clinton's Ditch could be carefully cleared. The

location of the First Contract could be marked, as could the path of the Carry Road through the property. The Native American site could have an interpretive display set up, and its existence at this western end of the Oneida Carrying Place could be placed into proper context. Consideration could be given to rebuilding structures that once stood as part of the ECV's outdoor museum assembly, but have since been lost to neglect. This includes smaller structures like the bandstand gazebo that once stood on the village green and the water tower for the train ride.

The artifacts and objects still located at the ECV at the time might still be able to be restored and repaired, inventoried, and placed back onto exhibit, provided that these parts of the city's collection are legally protected, insured and stored in a secure place. The objects that were removed from the property like the Harden Collection might not return as they have been re-donated elsewhere. The Canal Society of New York's collection, currently in the custody of the New York State Museum, could conceivably be returned to the Canal Museum building at the ECV. The void left in the barn that housed the Harden Collection could find a new use, whether it be an indoor lecture or event space, or a new collection of farm and carriage items could be sought to replace what was once on display.

With a structured interpretive plan in place, there would be the opportunity for new and different aspects of the Erie Canal's contributions and influence to be woven into existing histories of the buildings to create a more cohesive narrative than was presented to visitors in the past. A professional staff could bring new approaches to presentation and interpretation at the ECV. This could build upon the successful interpretation of former employees and volunteers, incorporating the role of the Oneida

Carrying Place and Wood Creek into the history of the Battle of Oswego, for example. Event planning and programming could bring people to the ECV who may have not been there before, and expand visitors to include more heritage tourists, school-age children, and community members who may be seeking to connect more deeply with their local history. In similar heritage village attractions like Plimoth Plantation, specially targeted programs seek to bring entire families into the village for an unusual party experience, or even an overnight stay in one of the village's buildings.²³⁷ This kind of non-traditional immersion in a heritage experience presents the chance for a different kind of connection with the heritage place. The ECV could become more than just a failed experiment in using historic tourism as an economic development tool, more than an eyesore of neglected buildings and overgrown weeds in a pothole-ridden parking lot, and more than just a memory to those who spent so much of their time working to make the ECV the heritage place that it was to so many visitors.

In this way, the city and community can learn from the mistakes of the past. Moving forward from what was and what is, the city and community can help carry the ECV into the future for the next generation (Fig. 33). Saving the ECV would protect the local, state and nationally significant layers of the property in their current state. With minimal intervention, the older layers of the ECV site can continue to exist, hopefully with more integration within an interpretive plan for visitors. Marking features like the Carry Road, the Native American site, and the site of the First Contract would be of great value to future presentation and interpretive efforts.

²³⁷ "Family Overnights in the 17th Century." Plimoth Plantation. Last accessed Apr. 29 2018. <https://www.plimoth.org/learn/programs-kids-scouts-families/family-overnights-17th-century>.



Figure 33: A little boy climbing on the fence along the towpath at the ECV, with packet boat and train rides in background. Circa 1980s. [Source; Rome Historical Society Collection, undated].

Whoever steps up to save the ECV can begin to rebuild its audience base, and bring in a new generation of visitors to experience the heritage place that the ECV has become for so many. There have been changes in the world of heritage tourism in the days since the ECV was constructed. The ECV is the layer that links all of the other layers together.

The evolution of this specific type of tourism presents an opportunity for the ECV to be able to be inspirational for other struggling historic sites, as its administrators could learn from its past and make better choices for its future. In light of the ECV's missed potential, the failures surrounding its past, and the threats facing it today, there is always the possibility of hope. "Hope is a good thing... maybe the best of things,"²³⁸ and it is not too late to hope that the Erie Canal Village can once again be a vibrant heritage place. By preserving and restoring the ECV, Rome can once again be proudly recognized as the City of American History.

²³⁸ Frank Darabont, dir., *The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994; (Castle Rock Entertainment: 1994), film. Last accessed Apr. 28 2018. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0111161/quotes>.

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