

An aerial photograph of a canal lock system, likely the Erie Canal. The lock is a long, narrow channel filled with water, where numerous kayakers in colorful gear are gathered. The lock is flanked by concrete walls and has a bridge crossing it. In the background, a residential neighborhood with houses and trees is visible, along with a larger bridge spanning the canal. The sky is clear and blue.

# 200

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ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION



## ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL (1825 – 2025)



**William J. Hochul, Jr.**  
First Gentleman of New York,  
Co-Chair



### Letter from the Erie Canal Bicentennial Commission Co-Chairs and Commissioners

The opportunity to lead the Bicentennial Commission on behalf of Governor Hochul is an honor and source of pride for each of us.

As lifelong New Yorkers, we were introduced to the Erie Canal through our New York State history lessons, learning about Governor DeWitt Clinton's Wedding of the Waters and, of course, singing the iconic folk song, *Low Bridge*. As adults and as public servants, we have experienced the Canal in different ways: as a source of recreation; as an economic driver in upstate communities; as an influential public infrastructure project; and as a vibrant tapestry of stories of New Yorkers from the Industrial Revolution forward. In many ways, the story of the Erie Canal is the story of New York's emergence as the Empire State.

As we commemorate this nationally significant Bicentennial, we reflect on the Erie Canal's history while also looking ahead to a Canal System revitalized for a third Century of operation. We are proudly weaving these various perspectives together through a series of planned community events, legacy investments, and partnerships with fellow New York State agencies, institutions of art and higher education.



**Brian U. Stratton**  
Director, New York State  
Canal Corporation, Co-chair



**Walter T. Mosley**  
New York State Secretary of State,  
Commissioner



**Hope Knight**  
President and CEO, Empire State  
Development, Commissioner



**Randy Simons**  
Commissioner Pro-Tem, New York  
State Office of Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation, Commissioner



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# ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL (1825 – 2025)



**Governor Kathy Hochul**

## Introduction

The New York State Canal System is comprised of four distinct canals, spanning more than 500 miles and intersecting more than 200 communities across 21 counties. In partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the Commission will advance a series of events, forums, and legacy projects that explore the Erie Canal’s multifaceted past, while casting an eye toward its future and what form that may take in the hands of the generations to come.

The theme for the Bicentennial, culminating in Fall 2025, is *Raising More Voices*. The Erie Canal represents an unprecedented feat of engineering and ingenuity, connecting the Eastern Seaboard to the Great Lakes and the burgeoning American West beyond. At the same time, we also recognize that the story of the Erie Canal is not monolithic; that by telling the diverse stories that comprise a fuller, more complete account of the Canal’s past and present, we can better envision a vibrant and inclusive future. Each of the planned events described in our plan is an opportunity to reflect on the Erie Canal’s history and to set a vision for the third Century of operation.



# ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL (1825 – 2025)

## Planned Events and Commemorations

A robust range of programming scheduled through October 26, 2025, New York State's Erie Canal Bicentennial will include inclusive community events and forums across the Canal Corridor. To name just a few, these will include the following:



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## ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL (1825 – 2025)



**Major and Corridor-wide Events:** e.g., launching the replica of Governor DeWitt Clinton’s 1825 canal boat *Seneca Chief* from Buffalo’s Canalside in September 2025 to travel to New York Harbor



**Community Events:** e.g., numerous events across upstate NY funded by a NYS Canal Corporation – Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor grant program (2024 –2025)



**Arts and Culture:** Partnerships with New York State orchestras, featuring diverse, emerging composers, complemented by canalside concerts and educational programming (2024–2025)



**Academic Forums:** a series of public lectures and panels comprised of State University of New York colleges and universities, the Department of State and New York State leaders to explore how the Canal System can be revitalized as a driver for upstate economic development and environmental stewardship (2024-2025)

**World Canals Conference:** September 21 – 25, 2025, in Buffalo;

## ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL (1825 – 2025)



opportunity for Governor to speak; Will attract from across local, national and international audiences [wcc2025buffalo.com](https://wcc2025buffalo.com)



**Legacy Projects:** ribbon cuttings for major community waterfront enhancements and new investments in preservation projects, recreational trails and public amenities (2024 – 2025)



**Bicentennial Promotion Community Toolkit:** promote consistent messaging; social media images and video, fact sheets, banners and giveaways for communities and sites across the 500+ mile canal system, with support from I Love NY (2024 – 2025)



**Economic Development:** The New York Power Authority investments that help to ensure that the Canal remains an economic driver for upstate communities as we enter the third century of operation