The City ‘Where The Water Never Ends’ To Host NYS Canal Conference

Posted on August 31, 2012 by Steve Yablonski

OSWEGO, NY – A complete replica of an 1862 canal schooner is docked at the H. Lee White Marine Museum. She is embarking on a six-week tour of the canal and will be in Oswego Sept. 1-3.

On Friday afternoon, the Lois McClure served as the backdrop as representatives of the Canal Society of New York State and local officials announced that the 14th New York State Canal Conference will be held Sept. 30 to Oct. 2 in Oswego.

The conference is being co-presented by the NYS Canal Corporation and Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Additional major sponsors include Brookfield and the Port of Oswego.

The new Lake Ontario Event and Conference Center will serve as the event’s venue.

The 2012 New York State Canal Conference is a “must see event,” according to Kal Wysokowski, conference chair.

“Our lineup includes international speakers such as James Clifton from the United Kingdom’s Tourism Enterprise Group, Pares Canada; and regional experts from Kentucky, Ohio and of course New York State,” she said.

“Oswego welcomes attendees to its city, port, river, lake and canal – indeed a place where the water never ends. The conference will include panels and presentations of major issues for the canal system.”

Even though there will be some history presentations; the conference is about the future, according to Thomas Grasso, president of the Canal Society of New York State.

Waterways are helping spur economic revitalization, he pointed out.

“As a community, we are proud to host the 2012 New York State Canale Conference in a location where the water never ends,” said Jonathan Daniels, executive director of the Port of Oswego.

He said 37 years ago, he was an elementary student. The teacher took the class on a tour of the Erie Canal.

“Little did I know that years later, I’d be standing here in front of you as a member of the host community (of the New York State Canale Conference). One month from now it will be an incredible canal conference.”

He pointed to the Lois McClure as a symbol of “What is representative of what was so wonderful in our waterway in the upstate region.” And, in the opposite direction, he noted one of today’s modern vessels, moving cement into this region.

“The canal has played a significant role in shaping the economy of the city of Oswego, and New York State as a whole. The conference will show how we continue to depend on the recreational and commercial activities of the waterway and will outline development opportunities that will enhance our economic fortunes for the future,” Daniels continued. “We’ve come full circle. The canal today is as vital a waterway as it ever has been.”

Not that very long ago, Brian Stratton trudged to classes on the SUNY Oswego campus.

On Friday he returned to the Port City – as the director of the New York State Canal Corporation.

“The Canal Conference presents an opportunity to look back on all that we’ve accomplished together, to explore opportunities for the future and to prepare for challenges that lie ahead,” Stratton said. “As we look back on a period that presented us with our fair share of challenges, we’ve also accomplished so much under the leadership of Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Whether it is the transformative impact of the governor’s Regional Economic Development Councils initiative, or the resurgence in commercial shipping, there is a palpable sense of hope in communities all throughout the Canal Corridor.”

The canal system annually generates “at least $380 million. It is a tremendous economic engine,” he said. “Without our canals, New York would not be the state it is today; in fact, our nation would not be where it is today.”

Daniels recalled the January day that canal officials visited his office to discuss hosting the conference.
“What type of facility do you have here that could house that type of activity?” he said they asked.

He said he told them, “If you turn around and look, the Broadwells are going to build a $6 million new conference center just for you, just for this event.”

The quip drew laughter from the audience members, including George Broadwell.

“I know a little bit about having a good time in Oswego,” Strutton said with a laugh. “I was a (college) student here in the late 1970s and Broadwell’s was a place we went to once or twice (referring to the former tavern on West Bridge Street where a gas station now stands).”

Following the announcement, the Marine Museum hosted a luncheon and offered tours.

Mercedes Niess, executive director, thanked her staff for preparing the luncheon.

She also thanked the canal officials for letting her “piggyback” on their press conference.

“We’re so lucky to have the Lois McClure here today,” she said and thanked the sponsors who made it all possible.

Also on hand for the event was Art Cohen, (founder) director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.

“We are a little over two months into a four-month, very ambitious journey to talk about the War of 1812 and the canals that were built in the aftermath,” he said. “And, we have had more than 15,000 people from communities all up and down the coast as well as Canada aboard the (Lois McClure).”

He credited the support they get from the communities with allowing the ship’s tour to be so successful.

“It is a coming together of so many entities on so many levels. And frankly, that is what makes it terrific for us. This is giving the gift of history,” he said.

“We are pleased to welcome this replica canal schooner back to the waters of the New York State Canal System. As a major sponsor of her four-month voyage commemorating the War of 1812, we celebrate the rich maritime heritage of the Empire State and surrounding regions,” Strutton said. “We encourage everyone to visit one of the 15 stops the Lois McClure will make along the Canal System.”

The journey of the Lois McClure highlights the maritime heritage of New York and Canada, focusing on the War of 1812. This year’s bicentennial of the conflict provides an opportunity to explore this important chapter in world and regional history. Many ports along the tour were significant fortifications during the War of 1812, including Kingston, Ontario; Sackets Harbor; and Oswego.

For more information, contact the museum at 342-0480 or info@hleewhitemarinemuseum.com

NYS Canal Conference

September 30 will showcase Oswego with a variety of activities hosted in partnership with the Port of Oswego, Oswego County Department of Development, Tourism & Planning, the Greater Oswego-Fulton Chamber of Commerce and the lake Ontario Event and Conference Center.

Delegates and the community at large will have an opportunity to enjoy the Great Pumpkin Festival, reenactment of a Civil War battle, tour and ride on Canal Corporation vessels and enjoy an Oktoberfest celebration with a light show and fireworks.

Registration fees for delegates include a 12-month pass to five museums.

The program is varied in scope.

The opening plenary session on Monday is a presentation by Daniels on the economic impact of the port.

Other program highlights include sessions by Canal Corporation staff on the devastating floods of Irene in 2011, connecting canoe/land and water trails, the 2014 centennial celebration of the Panama Canal, sport fishing on the Erie Canal, the Port of Lyons technical and financial feasibility evaluation, restoration of the Ohio and Erie Canal aqueduct over Tinkers Creek in Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the revival of the Lachine Canal.

The Spirit of the Canal Award and the Trail Tender Award will also be presented during the conference.

A full description of conference sessions can be found at http://www.newyorkcanals.org/explore_canalconf2012.htm

For registration information, contact The Rivers Organization at rick@riversorg.com

For more information on the conference or the Canal Society of New York State, visit www.canalsnys.org

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Tresidder calls on Ritchie to halt spending tax dollars for political mailings

New York State 48th District Senate candidate Amy Tresidder is making a public plea to Senator Patty Ritchie to stop spending tax dollars on veiled campaign literature. Tresidder said that Ritchie has been using taxpayer money to send out literature that does nothing more than promote her re-election campaign.

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