

Supervisor's Column
6/27/2007
Sandra L. Frankel

Happy Trails on Brighton Canal

It's officially summer! From our offices at landlocked Town Hall, we decided that in light of the proposed new development along our stretch of the canal, we ought to get a glimpse of Brighton by boat. And so last week we embarked on the *Sam Patch* packet boat run by Corn Hill Navigation, a local non-profit founded to promote awareness of local historic waterways. We sailed through Lock 33 in Brighton, heading west through the Town, flanked by a lush tree canopy that includes aspen, maple and sycamore

Our Town has a wonderful asset in the Erie Canal, one of the most ambitious public works projects in American history. Workers started digging the Erie Canal in 1817, under the watch of New York governor DeWitt Clinton. Completed in 1825, the canal helped to fuel the economic growth of Western New York. You might have first learned about the Erie from the Tin Pan Alley jingle in grade school: *I've got a mule, and her name is Sal/Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal*. The song tells of hauling barges over the length of the Canal, "from Albany to Buffalo." Fortuitously located in the middle, the villages around Rochester enjoyed a dramatic, ninety percent cut in shipping prices – perfect for local farmers and mill workers with cargo to distribute. In its heyday, the canal shipped wheat flour, cattle, produce, soap and candles between Lake Erie and the Hudson River. Today the canal is used primarily for recreation.

Last year the Town of Brighton received a grant to transform our Erie Canal trail into an attractive area for recreational boaters, walkers and joggers. The Erie Canal

Greenway Grant Program has provided \$225,000 to install lighting fixtures, benches, kiosks, floating docks and small boat launches, along with attractive landscaping, along the 6,500 feet of the canal way in Brighton.

The City of Rochester was also awarded \$224,100 to provide similar amenities along 1,000 adjacent feet of the canal railway and waterway. Developers Anthony J. Costello & Son, LLC, will be matching the state money, bringing to nearly \$1 million the total amount to beautify the walkway. Their proposed mixed use commercial and residential community, CityGate, is planned to revitalize the former Iola complex, at the intersection of Westfall Road and East Henrietta Roads in Brighton and Rochester. The development – with 19 acres in Brighton - will include pedestrian-friendly streets, retail services, multi-use properties and public amenities, according to lead developer Brett Costello.

Another canalside venture proposed by Anthony J. Costello & Son, LLC, would develop a 63-acre parcel of land next to Meridian Centre Park with a diverse mix of housing types, from single-family homes to townhouses to lofts. Both proposed projects would enjoy the benefits of being on a world-class waterway, which offers a host of recreational opportunities for nearby residents and the general public.

In its great beauty and versatility, the Erie Canal both embodies Brighton's venerable past and holds great promise for its future development. To continue your venture into Brighton history, please join us at Gideon Cobb Days this Friday and Saturday at the Buckland House, 1341 Westfall Road. These annual festivities pay tribute to Gideon Cobb, a pioneer who arrived in Brighton during the early nineteenth century and constructed a kiln to manufacture bricks. Cobb was driven by a fervent desire to

build a community – one brick at a time – and to carve a civilization from the wild frontier. He founded the Rochester Brick and Tile Co., furthering Brighton’s reputation as a bastion of brick making.

The celebration begins with a luncheon and lecture on Friday, June 29, with local historian and author Gary Lehmann speaking on the Buckland Farm Museum. On Saturday, festivities will move to the Buckland House Grounds, where you can enjoy the landscaping provided by the Allyn’s Creek Garden Club, glimpse inside the House, take part in an archeological dig and enjoy a bus tour of Historic West Brighton. The barbershop quartet “Fever Pitch” will entertain on the farmstead throughout the day. What a pleasant way to enjoy the start of summer!