



# THE MULE

FALL 2017

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*Camillus Erie Canal Park - Founded 1972*



## The Erie Canal and the Stagecoach by Richard Palmer



Even before the Erie Canal was completed its entire length, a traveler could choose between the rough ride in the stagecoach over the dusty or muddy turnpikes or the more leisurely cruise on the Middle Section of the Erie Canal, which had opened for navigation between Utica and Montezuma in May, 1821. But contrary to popular belief, this new mode of travel did not render stagecoach travel obsolete as the railroads did later. It merely complemented it as an alternative mode of travel.

In dry weather, travelers found the stagecoach a pleasant mode of transportation with the spectacular scenery across upstate New York. But the weather did not always cooperate and travel could be very rough. At times, passengers had to get out and assist in pushing the coach up a hill or pry out of the mud.

Packet boat travel thrived on the Erie Canal prior to the advent of the railroad.

For the canal did not pass through all communities across upstate New York. Also, the stagecoach proprietors continued to hold all the mail contracts which provided a lucrative income.

If travelers were in a hurry, or wanted to see a more varied countryside, they usually took the stage, rented one, or purchased their own carriage. If travel was particularly heavy and one stage could not handle the crowd, additional stages were put into service. Frequently three or four of these "extras" would follow the regular coach.

By paying a certain price—usually the fare of seven passengers—an affluent traveler might reserve for himself and family and servants an "exclusive extra," in which none but his party and invited guests might enter. Such a charter ran on his orders in regard to hours of arrival and departure. The destination had to be reached within an agreed time.

Canal packets were at first a popular novelty. Very few people - with the exception of emigrants and tourists - traveled the entire length of the canal. Although the packet boat afforded an opportunity to "look around," the stagecoach offered variety of scenery and swiftness - that is if one was able to survive the bone-jolting ride over only moderately maintained turnpikes and public roads.

Also the canal was closed four or five months of the year which left the stagecoach the exclusive mode of public transportation during the winter until the coming of the railroads. There was plenty of passenger business for both the canals and stagecoaches during the navigation season. Many travelers preferred the canal as it was less fatiguing and cheaper as meals and lodging were included in the fare, and it was restful.

From the beginning the principal commodity carried on the canal was freight. The most common canal travelers were curious tourists and traveling families. Merchants, bankers and tradesmen bound to and from cities, attorneys on their way to court and businessmen found the stagecoach more expeditious.

By the time the canal was opened, the stagecoach business had more than 20 years to develop in this part of the country. In the 1820s, stagecoach routes spread over the state like a spiderweb. For about two years Montezuma was the western terminus of the canal. Here, perhaps more so than most other places, was a heavy concentration of stage lines that met the packets to convey passengers to their destinations. Connections were so arranged between the packet boat companies and the stage lines so there would be minimal detention.

On Aug. 3, 1821 the editor of the Lyons Republican noted that the traveler could "choose between a continuation in post coaches, or take the canal for 100 miles; by the later mode he would behold that grand project, and form some idea of its vast advantages, but would forego the pleasures that the land conveyance always affords."

Construction problems in the Cayuga Marshes west of Montezuma delayed the opening of that section of the canal until July 30, 1822. On that day the packet boat "Myron Holley" passed over the newly-completed stretch of the canal, from Lyons to Montezuma. That August, William Faulkner of Geneva and W.W. Fenlon of Montezuma established a daily stage line connecting with the packet boats. The stage left Gooding's Tavern in Canandaigua for Montezuma at 9 a.m., also connecting with the steamboat "Enterprise" at Cayuga Bridge. The returning stage conveyed westbound passengers to Geneva and Canandaigua.

Further evidence of the close association between stagecoach and packet is gleaned from newspaper advertisements. In June, 1823, Samuel Allen established two daily north-south runs between Palmyra and Canandaigua, and Lyons and Geneva, respectively. The stages left Palmyra and Lyons in the morning, returning in the afternoon in time to connect with the packets, eastbound from Palmyra and westbound from Lyons.

An advocate of the canal noted that packet boat passengers were charged only four cents a mile, including meals and lodging, "both which are as good, if not better, than at the taverns on the road." He claimed the passage from Utica to Weed's Basin (Weedsport), 87 miles was "as rapid as the stages travel, much less expensive, no risk of life or limb and no fatigue or dust attending."

Creation of stagecoach service between Lyons and Geneva in June, 1823 also brought daily mail service to Lyons. In turn the Lyons Advertiser was able to get out its weekly newspaper two days earlier than previously. Stage passengers had to be early risers, as this coach left Woolsey's Tavern in Lyons at 5 a.m., returning from Geneva at 4 p.m. It was advertised that "Passengers on the canal whose business may require to leave it for the Seneca Turnpike, will find the route a very pleasant one, and the carriages safe and expeditious." Also, that passengers could be assured of punctuality and that "sober and careful drivers will be furnished at all times."

Sources reflect a gradual improvement in stagecoach service in the early 1820s in conjunction with the canal. Stage lines connected with packet boats at such canal towns as Canajoharie, Utica, Chittenango, Syracuse, Weedsport, Montezuma, Lyons, Palmyra, Rochester and Lockport. At Buffalo there were excellent stagecoach accommodations in all directions, with daily lines to Lewiston and Niagara Falls, and along the Ridge Road and turnpikes.

Spafford's 1824 edition of Guide for New York Travellers stated that the packet boat companies "have extensive connections with the lines of stages, the hours of arrival and departure of which are so arranged that there is little detention, in passing, in almost any direction, at any of the considerable villages, from the canal line. These packets also carry the mails." The packet boat companies also offered considerable daily service on the canal while steamboats had extensive service on Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, Lake George and Lake Champlain, as well as on the Hudson River.

Stage fare was generally four cents per mile, according to old guidebooks. Competition was keen. In January, 1823, a group of stage proprietors across upstate New York called the "Old Line," reduced fares to two cents a mile to force out competition and retain the mail contracts. One of their competitors was W.W. Fenlon, of Palmyra, established the first such service between Rochester and Auburn in January, 1823. This run east of Palmyra was over what was known as the Montezuma Turnpike, and operated three days a week.

A popular alternative detour between Rochester and Niagara Falls was the scenic 80-mile stagecoach ride over the Ridge Road, which was heavily patronized in the early days especially by tourists. This essentially is today's Route 104. However, travelers had to be early risers as the stages left Rochester westbound, and Lewiston, eastbound, at 3 a.m. Under the best conditions, this trip took 16 hours and can be driven today in about two hours or less.

Fenlon's route was 10 miles shorter than previously established routes. But the the "Old Line" proprietors eventually got the upper hand and Fenlon withdrew from the business. Isaac Sherwood, one of the "Old Line" proprietors, and later his son, John M. Sherwood, controlled most of the business between Utica and Rochester.

The Erie Canal was opened its entire distance with a grand celebration on Oct. 26, 1825. Its benefits were almost immediate. Especially in the larger communities along the canal, stagecoaches lined the docks to take passengers to their final destinations.

An example of the cooperation between the packetboats and stagecoaches is reflected in an advertisement that appeared in the Oswego Palladium, June 6, 1832:

### **New Line of Packet Boats Between Utica, Chittenango and Syracuse**

A line of very commodious boats, for the carriage of passengers and light freight. The boats are fitted up in a superior style with spacious cabins for ladies and gentlemen. The arrangements for sleeping are peculiarly good; every berth having a canvas bottom, and supplied with large and thick mattresses. No pain has been spared to render the boats as commodious as possible. The boats on the line are—

The Philadelphia, Capt. S. Haight, The New Kentucky, Capt. P. Westerman jr. The Naid & Nerid, Capt. J. Bellinger. And will have their station, at Utica, on the west side of Genesee street, adjoining the store of Butler, McDonough & Co. A boat will leave Utica every morning at 5 o'clock, after the arrival of the stages and boats from Schenectady - and as

there is not a single lock between Chittenango and Utica, passengers will be able to sleep with as much comfort and ease as in a private house, and every precaution will be taken to ensure quiet and silence.

A boat will leave Chittenango, every evening at 5 o'clock after the arrival of the western and southern stages.

In continuation of the line, a light boat will leave Chittenango every morning, and convey passengers to Syracuse. At 2 P.M. the light boat will again leave Syracuse, and arrive at Chittenango by 6 o'clock, where they will take the larger boat for the night, and arrive in Utica the next morning.

Passengers going west, will arrive at Chittenango in season for the morning states; likewise, passengers wishing to go south, to Cazenovia, New Woodstock, DeRuyter, Homer, Ithaca, and to Perryville, Peterboro, Morrisville, Norwich, and Unadilla, can go immediately on without delay.

This line has been established for village accommodation, and not with any design to compete with any other line of boats. Every attention will be given to those whose business or inclination may induce them to patronize the line. The proprietor has requested all the captains to avoid racing, and to keep out at their regular speed without collision, if practicable.

The director of this line, solicits such a share of public patronage as his efforts to accommodate shall entitle him to; and while he would not deprecate the conveniences of other boats and stages he deems it due to the interest of the proprietor, to caution the public against misrepresentations which are often practiced by the agents of rival establishments.

Application for passage to be made to the captains on board the boats.

For the proprietor,

*GEORGE T. PERRY. Chittenango, April 16, 1832.*

The editor of the Wayne County Sentinel of Palmyra noted on May 19, 1826:

"Since the completion of the canal, the travel through this country has gradually though rapidly increased. There are now nine lines of stages that leave Rochester daily and one semi-weekly in the following manner:

"Three lines via Canandaigua to Albany, one via Palmyra and Montezuma to Albany, one to Geneseo, one to Lewiston, one to Batavia via Scottsville, via Churchville, one to Penfield, all daily and one to Oswego, semi-weekly; besides which there is a departure of three packet boats daily, one east and two west.

"In addition to which, the transportation (freight) boats take a great share of passengers. At a modern calculation there depart daily the round number of 130 persons from Rochester, the site of which 14 years ago was literally a forest."

This cooperative effort continued until the completion of the chain of railroads across New York State that was to become the New York Central. By 1854, the passenger packet boats were a thing of the past, although stage lines continued to operate on routes not served by either canals or railroads.

Memories of the colorful era of the stagecoach lingered on for generations of travelers who vividly recalled how the drivers, with great dexterity, handled the reins of four-horse teams and wielded the whip, giving it a smart crack over the leaders' ears. The leaders were the lead horses and the rear horses were referred to as the wheelers.

It was an enchanting sight to observe the stage come down a hill at full speed - the driver holding the reins in one hand and cracking his whip with the other. Approaching a stop, usually a wayside inn, he would blow his horn to signal his arrival. It was once written:

*He tightens the reins and whirls off with a fling  
From the roof of the coach his ten feet of string;  
Now lightly he flicks the 'nigh' leader's left ear,  
Gives the wheelers a neighborly slap with the stock  
They lay back their ears as the coach gives a rock  
And strike a square trot in the tick of a clock!  
There's a jumble, a jar and a gravelly trill  
In the crunch of the wheels on the slate-stone hill  
That grind up the miles like a grist in a mill.  
He touches the bay and he talks to the brown,  
Sends a token of silk, a word and a frown,  
To the filly whose heels are too light to stay down.*

Town of Camillus Erie Canal Park  
109 East Way  
Camillus, NY 13031

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<b>Camillus Canal Society, Inc.</b>	
New Membership or Renewal Application	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I Want to Be a Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Please Renew My Membership
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Adult - \$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen (Age 60 and Over) - \$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family - \$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting - \$40.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining - \$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor - \$100.00
Make check payable to Camillus Canal Society, Inc.	
Name:	
Address:	
City, State Zip:	
Phone:	Cell Phone:
<input type="checkbox"/> Please Contact Me About Volunteering	E-mail Address:
Mail To: Tom Barba, 146 Terrace Way, Camillus, NY 13031	
New Memberships Received after June 1 Will Pay Half Price for That Year. The Half Price Feature Does Not Apply to Renewals.	

## A GRAND CELEBRATION

In the spirit of the Bicentennial of the Erie Canal that changed the face of our country and New York became the Empire State, the Camillus Canal Society planned a very exciting Towpath Day. As our boats traveled along the mile section from Sims Store to the Aqueduct, we had a series of ten tableaux depicting 200 years of Erie Canal History. We are pleased to say it was very successful venture .

In addition the Camillus Solvay Geddes Rotary group held their annual 5k walk/run Mule Skinner Race that benefits many community organizations.

We were treated to a performance of The Thornden Morris Dancers and A two man show called "Sluices, Locks and Hoggees" by OHA featuring Scott Peal.

Across the canal, we held "KIDS STUFF." MAKE AND TAKE projects representing the canal era are always popular. The Home Depot team brought sailboat kits for youngsters to build. Everyone has fun with rock and face painting. There were a variety of vendors and demonstrations of old fashion crafts, spinning, weaving and woodturning. Members of St. Luke's Church crewed the ice cream booth. At the Steam-up, the flywheel of the engine mesmerized visitors. We all enjoyed our mouth watering traditional Central New York food as we listened to the Blue Grass music of Diamond Someday; The sound of The Soda Ash 6 performing aboard the Camillus Erie is always a great highlight. The day's exciting activities ended with an evening concert by Symphoria and fireworks over the aqueduct.

### We Thank the Community

The Camillus Canal Society wishes to thank the Camillus community for their support during Towpath Day. We wish to extend our gratitude especially to Mary Ann Coogan ,Supervisor, Town of Camillus and other town officials who went the extra mile.

We are indebted to Eric Bacon and the parks and recreation staff for setting up and taking down equipment. We are overwhelmed with the generosity of Paul Legnetto, Superintendent Town Highway Department, and his crews that transformed the Aqueduct parking lot. Our hats off to Kathy Sloan of Home Depot who single handedly painted the new guide rail and will oversee new plantings. We wish to express our appreciation to Jim Nightingale who headed the police detail for Towpath Day. They did an outstanding job dealing with the safety of our visitors. We thank the Codes Department under the direction of Tom Price. We appreciate the presence of the W.A.V.E.S under the supervision of Al Kalfass and the Fire Department under the guidance of Chief McBride. Members of Troop 90 of Warners lended assistance to our visitors.

The concert by Symphoria and an amazing fireworks display was sponsored by Solvay Bank, The Camillus Solvay Geddes Rotary Club, Fairmount Animal Hospital, Learn as You Grow and the Camillus Sportsmen Club who also provided transportation during Towpath Day.

Hats off to the West Genesee Transportation Department that made the shuttle service to the Aqueduct run very smoothly.

To all our volunteers, vendors, musicians and entertainers, we thank you for making this wonderful celebration a grand occasion.

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW CHAIR OR CO-CHAIRS TO PLAN TOWPATH DAY, AUGUST 11. IT WILL BE A PAID POSITION. MANY ACTIVITIES ARE IN PLACE, DETAILED INFORMATION AND TRAINING AVAILABLE. GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL AND PEOPLE SKILLS REQUIRED. We would prefer a person familiar with our operation.**

**INFORMATION CONTACT: Liz 315. 391. 7020;dwbeebe@verizon.net**

## VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF TOWPATH DAY

About 140 volunteers worked behind the scenes to celebrate. An extra special shout out to Joe Menzel and the kitchen crew for delicious sausage sandwiches. We wish to express our appreciation to Jim MacKessy and his crew for the steam-up. A big thank you to Janet Connors who coordinated Kids Stuff activities. Congratulations to Pat Cooper who topped her own record of raffles sales. We would like to recognize Barbara Brady for her wonderful eye in engaging vendors. We are very grateful to Don Mosher who drove the tractor pulling the wagon that transported visitors to the park. We would like to express our gratitude to our skilled boatman under the watchful eye of Garry Klink and Jim Thrall. We recognize and acknowledge the outstanding work of Corinne Kinane and Larry Young whose research led to an amazing narration for the tableaux. A very special thank you to Donna and Dennis McCarthy and Linda and Jim Fassinger for attending to the needs of our actors. In the evening we continued our celebration with a marvelous concert by Symphoria and a fabulous fireworks show over the Aqueduct. We are deeply grateful to Scot and Jo Vanderpool for coordinating the shuttle service. We deeply appreciate the efforts of Doreen and Tom Barba and Larry and Sherry who hosted the evening activities.

### THE CALENDAR

**Holiday Party, Sunday, Dec. 3**  
**Appreciation Dinner, March 10**  
**Orientation Day, April 14**

**Memorial Day May 28**  
**Picnic July 21**  
**Towpath Day Aug. 11**

A plaque dedicated to Mid-night was installed on a canal stone in the little garden by the pavilion. Friends gathered on Saturday, October 7, to tell stories, recite poems and mention their special bond between themselves and Midnight.

### EDUCATION REPORT

The following is an excerpt from the newsletter of the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor.

*We recently wrapped up a yearlong evaluation of Ticket to Ride school programs at three sites: [Camillus Erie Canal Park](#), [Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum](#) and [Erie Canal Museum](#). Staff and volunteers at these sites worked closely with the R/E/D Group, an evaluation team based in the Syracuse University School of Education. We capped off the evaluation with a two-day interpretive training workshop led by staff from the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. More than 25 staff and volunteers who teach about the Erie Canal learned new techniques for leading dynamic, interactive tours. Many thanks to participating staff and volunteers for their dedication and enthusiasm and to the [Central New York Community Foundation](#) for providing critical funding support. **We received \$1500 dollars for educational development through the Central NY Community Foundation***

Janet Connors attended an annual Social Studies Conference at Driver's Village. Both Janet and Liz attended Geo-Fest sponsored by the Geographic Alliance in Rochester. Attendees were interested in seeing what our site had to offer. The 2018 Spring School Tours are filled.

### SNIPPETS AND TALES CALENDAR

Our Snippet and Tales Winter series will take place on Sunday afternoons 2-4 at Camillus Town Hall, 4600 West Genesee Street. Programs are free. Please join us for great conversations and refreshments.

**January 21 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the State Fair**  
**February 11 The Camillus Cutlery**  
**March 18 Split Rock**