



Erie Canalway Underground Railroad Initiative

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor—established in 2000 by Congress—encompasses the navigable waterways that make up the New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain Canals, as well as their historic alignments, and the 234 cities, towns, and villages that touch the canal system. The Corridor is managed by a 27 member federal Commission, appointed by the Department of Interior. The Commission does not own any property, but works with staff and partners (federal, state, local and nonprofit) to preserve, interpret and promote the Canalway’s history and heritage.

The story of the Underground Railroad (UGRR) is intimately tied to the Erie Canalway. While the Erie Canal is well known as a transportation marvel of the 1800s and for the economic growth it brought New York State, it was also served as a critical mode of transportation for both people and ideas. The focus of this initiative is on the Corridor’s canals, lakes and communities that make up the New York State Canal System, which played an integral role serving as a pathway or destination for freedom seekers.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor’s objectives for the UGRR initiative are to develop a strong network of UGRR sites/programs that will:

- Assist the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with its application to the **National Park Service Network to Freedom**.
- Document the significant role that the NYS canals and canal communities played in fostering the UGRR and Abolitionism.
- Open the door for more funding opportunities for UGRR sites/programs within the Corridor.
- Develop as tourism “product” that will promote partner UGRR sites/programs within the Corridor boundaries (peripheral sites will also be considered) to regional, national and international audiences.

Partnerships will play a major role in developing the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor UGRR Initiative. In order for us to develop a network of sites/programs, we ask that interested individuals **please fill out the attached application**.

In order to become an Erie Canalway UGRR partner, a site/program must meet specific criteria. However, a site or program’s inability to meet criteria does not exclude their participation in developing a strong UGRR program or product. Erie Canalway’s initiative is inclusive and **does not intend** to exclude anyone who does not meet standards; our hopes are to work with and guide those who do not meet the criteria in order for them to establish the identified best practices for inclusion in the Erie Canalway UGRR Initiative.



Criteria for Sites/Programs Erie Canalway UGRR Initiative

A UGRR site/program must meet the following criteria to be considered for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's UGRR Initiative:

1. Must be a qualified site or program.

A site is a physical structure, such as a historic home, museum, visitor center, building, church or cemetery. A program is any organization that offers educational programming through walking, motor or boating tours, workshops, school outreach, lectures, etc.

Sites/programs already a part of the National Park Service Network to Freedom *do not* need to apply to the Erie Canalway UGRR initiative. Please just send in a copy of your Network to Freedom application.

2. Must be within the boundaries of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.*

The scope of the Erie Canalway is 524 miles of the New York State Canal System (Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Seneca-Cayuga Canals and the Cayuga and Seneca Lake) and the 234 canal-side communities that touch the shores of the original 1825 canal alignments or the current day barge canal.

The sites/programs on the **peripheral boundaries of the Corridor may be considered if their interpretive story can be linked to activity within the Erie Canalway Corridor.*

3. UGRR interpretive theme must relate to waterways and/or communities within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The UGRR site/program must be thematically linked to the Erie Corridor waterways and communities that were used as a transportation route or destination for the UGRR or Abolitionism.

Theme examples may include:

- Freedom seekers using the canal or its towpath as an escape route.
- UGRR leaders conducting activity within the Canalway Corridor.
- Individuals using the canal or its towpath as a means to find escaped slaves.
- Buildings used as stations to hide Freedom Seekers or as a meeting gathering place.

4. Must have not-for-profit status.

The site or program is owned and operated by a local, state or federal government or a 501c(3) nonprofit.

5. Must be publically accessible.

Program or site must have a website and an email contact. General location, handicap accessibility, and public restrooms will also be considered.

6. Must have quality visitor experience.

The applicant must demonstrate that the site/program will be high quality and historically accurate based upon research and documentation. Promotional materials, website, and documentation will reflect high quality.

7. **Applicants must provide verifiable association to the Underground Railroad or Abolitionism.***

These associations to the Underground Railroad or Abolitionism must be verified using professional methods of historical research, documentation, and interpretation. Supporting evidence must be documented in the application through specific citations that would allow the reader to recreate the research.

Examples of verifiable documentation are materials left behind by the participants such as letters, diaries, account books, statements given to and printed by newspapers at the time events happened, census records, petitions, court records, etc.

Additional documentation such as electronic photographs of site (outside and inside) and interpretive exhibits and copies of promotional materials are to be submitted with application.

**Sites that already have the Network to Freedom designation need only to send a copy of their Network to Freedom application.*

8. **Must have the consent of the owner, manager, or director.**

Any site, facility, or program that applies for inclusion in the Erie Canalway initiative must have the consent of the owner, manager, or director. Publicly-owned properties must also have consent from the site manager. A letter of consent from the property owner must accompany each application.

Evaluation Process:

Applications inclusion into the Erie Canalway UGRR Initiative will be determined by a panel of UGRR professionals. If a site/program does not meet the established criteria, evaluators will identify the steps the applicant needs to take for inclusion into the Erie Canalway UGRR Initiative; Erie Canalway staff will provide the technical assistance needed to assist with the stewardship of the site/program development.

Evaluation Standards:

Quality of the Project

- Overall quality of the project proposal.
- The applicant demonstrates that the interpretive products will be high quality and historically accurate based upon research and documentation.

Historical Significance of Regional or Local Story

- The story is significant to understanding the Underground Railroad and/or anti-slavery movement in New York State as it pertains to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.
- The story demonstrates the influence, significance and impact of major figures, major events and prominent organizations (including their relationship with one another) on the Underground Railroad and/or anti-slavery movement within the boundaries of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Organizational Capacity

- Organization has the ability to effectively promote and market an exhibit.
- Applicant has demonstrated an ability to provide a quality visitor experience based upon existing educational programs and visitor services.
- Organization has history of UGRRR related events, research or exhibits.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Erie Canalway
National Heritage Corridor

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www.eriecanalway.org

2010 Application Erie Canalway UGRR Initiative

Name of Site/Program _____

Historic Name of Site _____

Location/Mailing Address _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

Contact Name _____

Website _____

Email _____

Owner of Site _____

National Register Status (THIS IS NOT REQUIRED TO JOIN THE ERIE CANALWAY UGRR INITIATIVE):

National Register of Historic Places

State Register of Historic Places

National Historic Landmark

Hours of Operation

Site/Program is open _____ months a year; from _____ to _____

Monday _____ Friday _____

Tuesday _____ Saturday _____

Wednesday _____ Sunday _____

Thursday _____

Is the site/program handicap accessible? _____ Any limitations? _____

Restrooms? _____ Gift Shop? _____

Site/Program Description

Please attach description of your site/program story addressing the following questions:

- a. What is your site/program’s interpretive story?
- b. Describe the visitor experience. What will the visitor learn? What materials are visitors given?

Documentation identified in criterion #7 must be attached to application. A bibliography of sources must also be included into the site/program description.

Name of Person Submitting Application

Address

Signature_____ Date_____

Permission of manager or owner of site/program to take part in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor UGRR Initiative is required. This information will also be used for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Network to Freedom Application.

Name of Manager or Owner Site/Program

_____ Date_____

Address

Signature_____ Date_____

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS:

February 27, 2009

PLEASE SUBMIT APPLICATIONS TO:

Lori Solomon-Duell
Director of Tourism Development and Marketing
P.O. Box. 219
Waterford, NY 12188

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS:

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