Dear Colleagues,

I invite you to submit an application to participate in the N.E.H. Landmark of American History and Culture Workshop, “Clinton’s Ditch: The Erie Canal in WNY” for K-12 educators. Two one-week workshops will be held at Niagara County Community College (N.C.C.C.) in Sanborn, NY (just outside of Buffalo) running from July 21-28 and August 4-11. The workshop is looking for forty teachers per week to study this engineering marvel to deepen their understanding of how the Erie Canal transformed the course of American history.

**Program Overview**

In the chamber of the U.S. Senate in February of 1832, Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky rose to deliver a speech in defense of the American System, his three-part vision for the American economy. In that speech, he spoke of the incredible economic growth that America witnessed throughout the previous decade:

> On a general survey, we behold cultivation extended, the arts flourishing, the face of the country improved, our people fully and profitably employed...a People out of debt; land rising slowly in value, but in a secure and salutary degree; a ready, though not extravagant market for all the surplus productions of our industry; innumerable flocks and herds browsing and gamboling on ten thousand hills and plains, covered with rich and verdant grasses; our cities expanded, and whole villages springing up, as it were, by enchantment; our exports and imports increased and increasing; our tonnage [shipping], foreign and coastwise, swelling and fully occupied; the rivers of our interior animated by the perpetual thunder and lightning of countless steam boats; the currency sound and abundant; the public debt of two wars nearly redeemed; and, to crown all, the public treasury overflowing.…

While no one factor can account for the prosperity that America enjoyed in the aftermath of the War of 1812, much credit must be given to the transportation revolution that reshaped the American landscape and the American marketplace. One pioneering project stands out as the source of much of this prosperity: The Erie Canal. While the Erie Canal preceded Henry Clay’s American System, the monumental undertaking no doubt served as motivation for Clay’s call for federal investment in internal improvements and helped to bind a nation at a time when distance raised the possibility of disunion.

The story of the Erie Canal is found in elementary school curricula throughout the union, and at the high school level, knowledge of the Erie Canal is imperative to understanding the wide-ranging impacts of the Market Revolution that swept America in the years following the War of 1812. Our weeklong examination of the Erie Canal will harvest the necessary context to study the larger themes of how advancements in transportation, communication, and engineering change not only the economy but the political climate, social interactions, and the culture of a people.

Participants can expect to study the Erie Canal through a variety of disciplines and visits to a number of historical sites. The themes that this workshop will focus on include:

- The historical context in which the Erie Canal was conceived and the political challenges surrounding the project
- The construction and engineering challenges of building the Canal
- The social and cultural impact of the Canal on the residents of upstate New York and the nation as a whole
- The economic impact of the Canal (with particular emphasis on Buffalo)
- How best to integrate the Erie Canal in the elementary or secondary classroom
**Project Faculty**

These themes will be explored through multiple mediums – art, historical documents, literature, and culinary culture. Participants can expect numerous opportunities to visit historic sites from Buffalo to Syracuse to enrich their study of the Canal, including a cruise along the Canal itself. Classroom sessions will be held at N.C.C.C. and a diverse selection of experts will facilitate exploration of the workshop’s themes.

- **Professor Tamara Plankins Thorton** of the University at Buffalo is an expert in the rise of capitalist culture in 19th century America and will lead participants through a series of lectures regarding the historical context in which the Canal was born. Dr. Thornton will also guide discussion of a seminal text on the Erie Canal – *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1824* by Dr. Carol Sheriff of the College of William & Mary – to address the social and cultural impact of the Canal.

- **Gerard Koeppel** is the author of the most recent narrative on the building of the Canal - *Bond of Union: Building the Erie Canal and the American Empire*. Participants will be able to travel to a number of sites following Mr. Koeppel’s lecture on the construction challenges to develop a first-hand understanding of the engineering feats that accompanied the completion of the Canal.

- **Dr. Roger Hecht**, Assistant Professor of English at SUNY Oneonta, will share the reflective writings of various 19th century Americans, including Mark Twain, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, to give participants a sense of how the canal changed American society. Professor Hecht will be using his book *The Erie Canal Reader, 1790-1950*.

- **Members of the curatorial staff at the University at Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery** will present how the artists of the Hudson River School incorporated the Erie Canal into their vision of the American landscape.

- **Dr. F. Daniel Larkin**, former provost and professor of history at SUNY Oneonta, and an expert on the New York State canal system, will lead participants through discussions of how the Erie Canal transformed the economy of New York State. Dr. Larkin is also a co-author of *Erie Canal, New York’s Gift to the Nation, a Document-based Teacher Resource*. The book contains a diverse array of sources (including maps, drawings, blueprints, paintings, photographs) and will be a valuable resource as participants design a document project that can be used in their classroom.

- **Dr. Lorrei DiCamillo**, Professor of Education at The Canisius College of Buffalo, and an expert on strategies within the social studies classroom, will be available throughout the week to foster discussion of bringing the Erie Canal into the secondary or elementary classroom. Dr. DiCamillo will assist participants in the development of a document project that suits their classroom needs.

- **Dr. Daniel Ward**, a life-long scholar of the Canal, will guide participants through the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse, NY with a special focus on the Irish immigrant experience along New York’s canals.

**Project Director**

I am a Buffalo native and am currently in my sixth year of teaching at Royalton-Hartland High School where I teach A.P. U.S. History, Regents U.S. History, and a political science elective through N.C.C.C. I graduated from Canisius College of Buffalo and earned a master’s in American history at the College of William & Mary. In addition to my high school teaching duties, I am a facilitator for an emerging professional development company that promotes rich, content-based learning rooted in the humanities. I created the intellectual framework, solicited faculty participants, and coordinated the site visits and other activities for the workshop.
Reading List
Because of the fast-paced nature of this one-week workshop, participants will be asked to read a few key texts prior to their arrival. These texts include:


Other texts that will be utilized during the seminar but for which pre-reading is not required include:


Landmarks Activities
In addition to the classroom session featuring these texts and the aforementioned scholars, the following site visits have been arranged for participants:

- A bus ride along the scenic Niagara Escarpment to visualize the challenge this region of New York posed to the engineering of the Canal.
- A boat-cruise through the only set of double locks (alongside the original Lockport “flight-of-five” locks) on the Erie Canal.
- An authentic 19th century meal featuring cuisine likely to have been served in canal ports.
- A tour of the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse, NY, site of the last remaining weighlock building in the United States and the restored Nine-Mile Creek Aqueduct in Camillus, NY
- A visit to the Erie Canal Discovery Center in Lockport, NY
- A guided tour of downtown Buffalo’s canal harbor and the city’s world-renowned architecture.
- A visit to one of the natural wonders of the world, Niagara Falls, on the final evening of our workshop.

All participants are expected to fully partake in all activities and assignments associated with the workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop (Saturday), participants will present a unique classroom resource that they will design based on their experiences at the workshop. Resources will be shared with other participants and archived on the workshop website.

Stipend
Participants will receive a $1,200 N.E.H. Summer Scholar stipend to cover travel, food, lodging, and other expenses associated with the workshop. Stipends will be paid at the end of each workshop and must be claimed as taxable income.
Accommodations
Recently constructed dormitory housing is available on-site at Niagara County Community College. Scholars in attendance from July 21-28 will be charged a per diem rate of $45. Scholars in attendance from August 4-11 will be charged a per diem rate of $50. All rooms feature single occupancy bedrooms with shared kitchen, bath, and laundry facilities. Participants will be required to provide their own bed and bath linens. For those traveling from afar, a linen service may be available at an extra cost to participants. Library, fitness center access, wireless internet access and access to computer workstations will be available to participants. Campus housing will not be able to accommodate participants traveling with families. The closest hotels are located in Niagara Falls or Lockport (about a 20-minute drive in each direction). Absolutely no alcohol is allowed in campus housing. Pictures of facilities can be found at http://www.nccchousing.com/

For meal options, summer scholars may purchase breakfast and lunch at on-campus dining facilities, but scholars should not expect a diverse array of menu options as the college will be operating limited facilities during the summer. At various points throughout the week, scholars will dine as a group at restaurants along the Canal corridor. Menus will range in price. All other dinners (Saturday evening in Niagara Falls excepted) will be provided by a catering service and scholars will be charged an upfront rate for these meals.

How to Apply
This workshop welcomes any educator with an interest in the Erie Canal. Because of the Canal’s prominence in both elementary and secondary curricula, teachers from all grade-levels are encouraged to apply. Furthermore, because of the interdisciplinary approach of this workshop, teachers of subjects other than social studies are strongly encouraged to apply.

Detailed application instructions can be found attached to this letter on the project website. However, please note the following:

• Four items are required for your application: a completed application cover sheet, your resume or short biography, a personal statement (see below), and a letter of recommendation from a supervisor.
• The most important part of the completed application is an essay of up to one double-spaced page. This essay should include information about your professional background and interest in the subject of the workshop; your special perspectives, skills, or experiences that would contribute to the workshop; and how the experience would enhance your teaching or school service.
• A hard copy of your completed application should be post-marked no later than March 4, 2013, and should be addressed as follows:
  
  Niagara County Community College
  Attn: Linda Warren
  N.E.H. Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshop
  3111 Saunders Settlement Road
  Sanborn, NY 14132

Closing
Thank you for your interest in this workshop. Please feel free to e-mail me at eriecanalwny@gmail.com with any questions and keep up to date with the latest news at www.eriecanalwny.org. I hope you will join us for “Clinton’s Ditch: the Erie Canal in Western New York”

Sincerely,

Pierson J. Bell
Project Director