



## Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct, Town of Camillus, Onondaga County

*The restored aqueduct from Nine Mile Creek.*

The historic Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct restoration project is extraordinary for both its technical achievement and its remarkable community involvement and support. Located in the Town of Camillus Erie Canal Park near Syracuse, the aqueduct, which opened in the 1840s, was constructed as part of an extensive enlargement of the Erie Canal. The original canal was built between 1817 and 1825 and stretched 363 miles from the Hudson River to Lake Erie, creating an all-water route to the interior of the continent. The Erie was an immediate commercial success, and within ten years New York began expanding the waterway and building lateral canals.

The 144 foot-long aqueduct, essentially a water-filled bridge that carried the canal over the creek, replaced a smaller aqueduct and lock, helping to speed the flow of goods and people. The aqueduct served the canal until 1918, when the new Barge Canal bypassed this section of the enlarged Erie. In 1972 the Town of Camillus acquired the property, including the abandoned aqueduct, and established the canal park. Since that time hundreds of dedicated volunteers have led the park's development, transforming the neglected waterway and its towpath into a scenic trail and building a replica of a canal store that interprets the canal's history. The park attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors, offering an array of recreational activities as well as boat tours, educational programs, and special events.

For many years the community dreamed of restoring the aqueduct, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 for its historic and engineering significance. The nonprofit Camillus Canal Society was established in 1996 to explore the project's feasibility and to raise funds. While returning the aqueduct to its original design and function seemed hugely ambitious and technically challenging, the all-volunteer organization was strongly committed to the project and worked hard to generate widespread community support among local officials, residents, and state legislators.

The Town of Camillus and the canal society collaborated on the project, which was completed in 2009 thanks to a \$300,000 historic preservation grant awarded and administered by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation under the Environmental Protection Fund. The grant was matched with public and private funds.

This is the first time in the state and perhaps the nation that a historic canal aqueduct has been restored and returned to full operation. Not only was the aqueduct's massive limestone structure repaired, its water-carrying wood trough was reconstructed generally following its original design. The aqueduct now holds the impressive new



*The aqueduct before (above left) and during its restoration (above right), showing the laminated timber trough being constructed within the limestone structure.*

trough, which consists of a heavy, laminated timber superstructure sheathed in water tight, laminated planks. When the project was completed, the adjacent earth dams in the canal prism were removed so that water could once again flow into the aqueduct, reconnecting it to the park's historic waterway.

The community is especially proud of the restored aqueduct, which has become a popular attraction in the park and along the Erie Canalway Trail. The rejuvenated aqueduct promises to enhance the public's understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of this legendary waterway. For more information, visit [ericanalcamillus.com](http://ericanalcamillus.com) and/or [townofcamillus.com](http://townofcamillus.com)



*Tour boats docked along the restored, water-filled aqueduct; Nine Mile Creek flows under it.*

