

Conversation with the Mayor - August 31, 2012  
Vicky Daly

**Path Through History - and to Economic Development**

I want to share with you an initiative that we, all of Wayne County, are already involved in. It is likely that you know little or nothing about it because it has been under the radar until this week. The first news article I have seen about it appeared on Thursday, August 30<sup>th</sup> in the Rochester D&C under the headline "State to Spend \$1 million on historical tourism". Why? Because Tourism vies with Agriculture as the number one industry in New York State. The title bounces back and forth from year. Either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tourism is bigger than manufacturing, Wall Street, and everything else. One in every thirteen people in the Finger Lakes Region of which we are a part. Last year tourism brought \$2.6 billion into the region. That 'b' is not a typo. The Governor sees its value.

The Finger Lakes Region, defined by NYS as Wayne, Seneca, Ontario, Yates, Monroe, Livingston, Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming Counties, has a wide range of offerings to entice visitors from across the country and the world. This new initiative, spearheaded by Governor Cuomo, will enable us to increase the number of visitors and provide a positive impact to our economy. This is going to happen in two ways, both equally important. Because this is done on a regional basis rather than community by community or even by county, participants are talking to each other and seeing the big picture. The Finger Lakes work group, of which I am a part, is made up of folks from all nine counties. We have talked about Historic Palmyra; the Sodus Point Light House and the Wayne County museum in Lyons, but we have also talked about the Women's Rights Museum in Seneca Falls, the Holland Land Office in Batavia, Letchworth State Park; the Clara Barton House in Dansville – and many, many more.

Wayne County Historian Peter Evans represents our county on the committee. I was asked to represent the canals – Erie and Seneca Cayuga and their related sites. Peter and I, along with reps of the other eight counties, prepared a list of sites within his/ her county that would be proposed for inclusion in later signage and marketing plans. I did not see Peter's final list nor he mine. At the PTH Conference on August 28<sup>th</sup>, the list for the Finger Lakes region included, in no particular order Ganondagan; George Eastman House; Holland Land Office Museum; Sampson State Park Military Museums; Historic Seneca Falls and Waterloo; Sodus Bay Lighthouse and Museum; Historic Palmyra; Granger Homestead; Sonnenberg Gardens; Genesee Country Museum, Susan B. Anthony House; Medina Railroad Museum; Clara Barton House; Revolutionary War Ambuscade Park, and the William Pryor Letchworth Museum. Many, many more, all, like these, meeting specific criteria, were submitted.

What happens next? The Governor's Office announced the proposed placement of new signage marking major historic events and directing travelers to sites providing more information on each along the Thruway and other major highways. I won't list all 18 identified at the Conference for the Finger Lakes Region, but two directly related to us are:

- Sign: 1813 British attack and destroy the Sodus Bay settlement  
Attraction: Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum
- Sign: 1830 Joseph Smith publishes the Book of Mormon in Palmyra  
Attraction: Historic Palmyra/ Village

Additional signage at exits is in the talking stage as is a website devoted entirely to this initiative. Social media, QR, and whatever technological innovations that develop, are anticipated to be part of the package. My understanding is that all criteria-meeting sites will be included in some way. The wealth of possibilities is staggering. So the meetings and discussion will continue. Personally, I am delighted that Tourism, so long undervalued, has come to the fore. I am pleased also that the role of the NYS canals, not just our Erie but the Champlain, Oswego and Seneca Cayuga were recognized as worthy of having specific representation in this effort. We have worked very hard to help make that happen.

This is an event you definitely want to put on your calendar. On Saturday, October 13th, the American Red Cross will sponsor “The American Red Cross Salutes Wayne County Military Families” at its Military Family Brunch at the Palmyra VFW Post, Route 31. From 10 AM until Noon on that day, Service members, their families and veterans are invited; it is an opportunity to learn about Red Cross services specifically for military families and other local services available to them. To RSVP for the brunch, email [Betsy.Americo@redcross.org](mailto:Betsy.Americo@redcross.org) or call (315) 331-3783.