

## Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Donates Replica Sailing Canal Schooner *Lois McClure* to the Canal Society of New York

VERGENNES, VT – Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is pleased to announce a donation that will further the study and appreciation of regional maritime history: the museum is donating its replica 1862-class sailing canal schooner *Lois McClure* to the Canal Society of New York, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the state's historic canals.

The replica schooner *Lois McClure* has been a staple of the museum's educational and outreach programs for many years. Initiated in 2001, the canal schooner replica project's goal was to understand the sailing canal schooner unique to Lake Champlain, how it was built and operated, and the impact the canals had on the region. Designed based on archaeological analysis from two shipwrecks in Lake Champlain, the boat was built by four shipwrights and over 200 volunteers, historians, and archaeologists. Launched in 2004, the boat was named in honor of philanthropist Lois McClure who, along with her late husband J. Warren McClure, has generously funded many of the museum's projects including the construction of the replica boat. The *Lois McClure* served as floating educational space for the museum, engaging the public in the rich history of Lake Champlain and the canals through immersive experiences and educational activities. The replica schooner went on 14 tours, traversing 15 waterways and over 9,200 miles, visiting 315 ports in Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Quebec, and Ontario, and welcomed over 312,000 visitors on board.

In 2022, the museum announced that the *Lois McClure* would retire after 20 years on water, concluding the replica project with two more seasons for the boat to be open at the museum. Additionally, this time provided an opportunity for archival and archaeological research, and to invite suggestions and options to retire the replica vessel. The boat's historically accurate design and its service educating the public on the role of canals in American history were core to exploring retirement options. When the Canal Society of New York expressed interest, both organizations saw the immense opportunity to continue the boat's story.

The donation of the *Lois McClure* is a testament to both organizations' missions and commitments to fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of maritime history. By transferring this unique replica vessel to the Canal Society of New York, all parties can ensure that the schooner will continue to serve as an educational space, engaging visitors with the rich heritage of New York's canals and waterways.

"I am thrilled to announce this donation of the *Lois McClure* to the Canal Society of New York," said Scott Hardy, chair of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's board of directors. "This remarkable vessel has played a pivotal role in the museum's on-water educational initiatives, and we are confident that it will continue to inspire and educate countless individuals as it embarks on this new chapter at the Canal Society of New York."

The replica schooner *Lois McClure* is open for the public to visit for free at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum until September 30, at which point the boat will close to the public to begin preparations for

its transfer to the Canal Society. Future plans for the *Lois McClure* will be shared by the Canal Society at a later date.

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**About Lake Champlain Maritime Museum:**

Founded in 1985, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum connects all people to Lake Champlain, inspiring them to learn from the past, build together in the present, and create a sustainable future. Committed to free access to the lake and its history, archaeology, and ecology, the museum is open to all from late May to mid-October with free admission. Year-round education programs serve more than 2,500 K-12 students, as well as hundreds of educators locally and nationally. For more information, visit [www.lcmm.org](http://www.lcmm.org).