

NEWVIEW TEAM



By John J. Rashak

Walkway Over the Hudson transforms an old railway bridge into a spectacular promenade over New York's iconic river.

Just a mile upriver of the Mid-Hudson Bridge, the Walkway Over the Hudson gives new life to the 120-year-old steel truss Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, which was the first bridge over the Hudson between New York City and Albany. At 6,767 feet long and 212 feet high, this is a big bridge—once the longest in the world. Completed in 1888, a mere five years after the Brooklyn Bridge, it was used as a gateway to the west for rail passengers from New England, World War II troops, and goods, although its importance for passenger transport began to diminish in 1917 with the completion of New York City's Hell's Gate Bridge.

A devastating fire in 1974 led to the bridge's early retirement. The railroad owners decided the cost of repairing the 700-foot section of charred railroad ties and warped rails was too great. Ideas for new uses for the bridge flourished, like using the bridge for a bungee-jumping business, or as a riverbank-to-riverbank shopping center. Then, a not-for-profit group called Walkway Over the Hudson, which owns the bridge, came up with the idea to transform it into the world's longest elevated public park in time for the Quadricentennial Celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that flows both ways.

After years of planning and fundraising—including a thorough eight-week inspection to ensure that the bridge was structurally sound—construction to transform it into a pedestrian walkway began in earnest in June 2008. A little over a year later, Governor David A. Paterson opened the Walkway Over the Hudson as the state's newest park on October 3, 2009, making it the longest pedestrian bridge in the world.

The newly opened Walkway affords visitors magnificent views of the Hudson River and surroundings, and will eventually link 27 miles of rail trails on both sides of the river—connecting Hopewell Junction in Dutchess County with New Paltz in Ulster County. With a pedestrian deck 25 feet wide and three 35-foot-wide viewing platforms, visitors can stroll, jog, or bike atop the spectacular promenade, or simply gaze out at the iconic river that has stirred our imagination since Henry Hudson first laid eyes on it back in 1609.

The grand opening of the Walkway drew thousands of visitors, and “the park in the sky” has quickly become a must-see destination for local residents and tourists alike, bringing eco-tourism dollars into the Hudson Valley and serving as a catalyst for a stronger economic and environmental future for the region.

QUADRICENTENNIAL LEGACY

Walkway over the Hudson is just one of three Quadricentennial “legacy” projects. Off the southern tip of Manhattan, restoration of the Governor's Island perimeter promenade will afford unparalleled views of the Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor and the Manhattan skyline.

On Lake Champlain, the state conducted a full restoration of the historic Crown Point Lighthouse, including an

original Rodin sculpture. Now, the light's beacon once again shines over the ruins of two nearby forts—Crown Point and St. Frederic—that symbolize the region's English and French heritage. Together, these projects symbolize New York's commitment to celebrate its rich history of discovery, innovation and economic prosperity.





Susan Shafer

SUPPORTERS

An amazing combination of public and private organizations was involved in transforming the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge into the Walkway Over the Hudson. In 1992, a core group of dedicated volunteers formed Walkway Over the Hudson as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the landmark bridge. The group was instrumental in garnering the support of a wide group of organizations and individuals to support the effort, including the State of New York, Walkway Over the Hudson, The Dyson Foundation, Scenic Hudson, the people of the Hudson Valley, and several elected officials of the region. Working together, these supporters raised funds, conducted research, and did public outreach that ultimately culminated in the completion of this one-of-a-kind construction project in just 16 months. For more information, visit www.walkway.org/.



Susan Shaler

Note: Walkway Over the Hudson is managed by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. While the walkway is generally open from 7 a.m. until sunset, the hours of operation may vary, so be sure to check out www.nysparks.com/parks before heading out.

John J. Rashak is an avid cyclist who lives in the Hudson River Valley.



Susan Shaler