



## **Daniel Franklin Ward, Ph.D.**

### **Curator, Erie Canal Museum**

### **Chair, Syracuse Public Arts Commission**

**Q. What visual elements do you think visitors to Downtown Syracuse most appreciate?**

**A.** People seem to be most taken with our surviving 19th and early 20th century downtown architecture. From nearly every spot downtown you can see something of interest or beauty.

**Q. Downtown Syracuse experienced a surge of development with the building of the Erie Canal. What time period was this?**

**A.** The first boats came to Syracuse by canal in 1820. By 1826, when the first canal spanning the state was fully operational, Syracuse was

already a popular stop. As a result, a building boom ensued. Downtown buildings were constructed of wood, brick and limestone, as well as more exotic materials brought in by canal boats.

**Q. Can you describe the architecture style typical of Erie Canal-era buildings?**

**A.** Many were functional “double-ender” buildings that were constructed along the south side of the Erie Canal. These structures allowed for in-loading of freight from both sides so that people on the street and on the canal boats could purchase wares. The buildings’ upper floors were primarily warehouses with lifting devices to bring in bulk freight. The Erie Canal Museum itself is housed in a unique Canal-era structure. It’s the last remaining weighlock building of its type in the world. These were stations where canal boats were weighed to assess tolls on the freight they carried.

**Q. How do these structures transition for modern day usage?**

**A.** The oldest buildings convert well into stylish and desirable living and working spaces. Nearly all of the buildings in Syracuse’s oldest neighborhood, Hanover Square, have been converted to street-level storefronts and businesses with apartments on the upper floors. Many retain original features such as brick walls and exposed beams.

**Q. Have modern-day architects and developers successfully blended new structures with the old?**

**A.** Today, we are in a period that holds the past in high esteem. We appreciate the old and we are careful not to disgrace it. I find the new structures in Downtown Syracuse fit well with the remaining old structures. Good taste prevails. It’s also gratifying to see downtown buildings that were defaced in the post-war era through the 60s, being restored to their former visual and aesthetic glory. That makes a big difference!

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