

INSIDE TODAY



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Ann Allen of Churchville, top, looks out at the river from the deck of the Mary Jemison as Michael Scharf of Pittsford and son Jack, 3, watch water splash the side of the boat. The boat, below, is back after a six-year absence. HEATHER CHARLES staff photographer

Riverfront revival links old, new in Corn Hill

Historic boat sails urban waters again

BRIAN SHARP
STAFF WRITER

Cruising beneath low-arching bridges, heading south from downtown, boat patrons leave behind the bustling construction at Corn Hill Landing for peaceful waters reflecting tree-lined riverbanks that shelter geese and other wildlife.

After the boat reverses course at the junction with the Erie Canal, its return trip down the Genesee River provides a view of Rochester's skyline framed



HEATHER CHARLES staff photographer

in the arches of the new Troup Howell Bridge. The one-hour lunch cruise aboard the historic Mary Jemison is the latest piece of the transformation along Exchange Boulevard. The return of boat cruises,

along with the bridge and the \$20 million commercial and residential development, is attracting interest on a less traveled edge of the city.

"People are always attracted to a waterfront,"

What's at stake

Years of work to improve the west bank of the Genesee River south of downtown is starting to show results. Corn Hill Landing is nearing completion. The first boat cruises have sold out some trips. Officials expect the area to draw more people downtown.

Inside Ticket prices, cruise schedule, map **4A**

said Paul Foti, who is overseeing construction at Corn Hill Landing on the river's west bank. "But I think a lot of people have kind of forgotten that right

CORN HILL, PAGE 4A

Bush responds to ...

Corn Hill

FROM PAGE 1A

in the heart of downtown is the river. You don't see a lot of that. You don't see a lot of opportunities where people can recreate or can access the water."

A recent afternoon drew a sparse lunch crowd aboard the 1930s boat, named for the "white woman of the Genesee" who lived with Native Americans along the river in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. With a seating capacity of 60 and a maximum capacity of 100, the Mary Jemison has seen its numbers seasaw from a handful of patrons to sold-out voyages since start up in May.

The noon-hour patrons on this day hailed from as near as Churchville and Pittsford to as far as Boston and Atlanta.

"It's very relaxing, very beautiful," said Jinchuan Yang, vacationing from Boston with his family. After spending Sunday at Niagara Falls, they traveled on Monday to Rochester to glimpse the Erie Canal. "We wanted to see Rochester, and we found the boat tour is a good way to see the area."

Seated atop the open-air, two-level vessel, his 8-year-old daughter, Qiuwei, grasped her flowered fishing cap in the wind. Her favorite part of the cruise? "The bridges," she said. At certain crossings, the captain warned people to sit, not stand, on the upper deck because the



HEATHER CHARLES staff photographer
Wenli Li of Boston points out birds along the river as her daughter Qiuwei Yang, 8, looks on during a lunch cruise on the Mary Jemison. Qiuwei's favorite part of the cruise was seeing the bridges.

clearance was so low.

Bill Pritchard is a city councilman and leads the City Center citizens' task force. The developments in Corn Hill are "a very visible example of the resurgence of interest in living downtown," he said.



Pritchard

Corn Hill Navigation — a nonprofit foundation that operates the Mary Jemison and another boat, the Sam Patch, on the Erie Canal in Pittsford — last sailed here six years ago, its ticket booth standing alone along a small dock on an otherwise barren riverbank. The company's hiatus from the

Genesee River coincided with the rebuilding and expansion of the Corn Hill dock.

Bustling area

Today, while there isn't a new ticket booth, the boat ties up at one of several docking points along a concrete promenade beyond which rise the four wings of Corn Hill Landing, reaching 3½ to 4½ stories.

"In a couple of years, it's going to be bustling down here," said Victoria Schmitt, spokeswoman for Corn Hill Navigation.

Schmitt envisions the refurbished promenade lined with private boats docked alongside for-hire and excursion crafts.

Foti and Mark IV Construction Co. are aiming to finish construction of Corn Hill Landing by year's end and be fully leased by next summer.

The development, on the drawing board for five years and under construction since May 2004, will attract people and businesses, offering 127 luxury apartments and first-floor commercial space. Apartments rent from \$650 for a studio to about \$2,000 for a four-bedroom unit.

Mark IV already has 80 percent of the retail area leased, with tenants including Spin Café coffee shop and Richport Pastries and Breads (which has a location at the Public Market), as well as an eyeglass store, an Asian restaurant, a gym, dry cleaner and a wine store.

On the move

Meanwhile, the first 10 renters have moved in and another 10 are in the pipeline, Foti said. Among them was 24-year-old Pittsford native Sam Taylor.

A student at the Rochester Institute of Technology in food

If you go

The Mary Jemison cruises daily from Corn Hill.

Lunch cruise:

Departs at noon and returns at 1 p.m. daily. Boarding begins at 11:50 a.m.

Tickets are \$17 for adults, \$15 for seniors and \$12 for children. Without lunch, subtract \$7 from ticket price. Lunch reservations must be made by 4 p.m. the day before the cruise.

Other daily, hourlong cruises depart at 2 and 4 p.m. with a minimum of 12 passengers. Reservations are recommended.

Happy hour cruise:

Departs at 6 p.m. and returns at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 18 and 25, and Sept. 1. Boarding begins at 5:50 p.m. All passengers must be 21.

Tickets: \$10

Wine tasting cruise:

Sept. 14 and Oct. 12 (A 21-and-older cruise. Same times as the happy hour cruises).

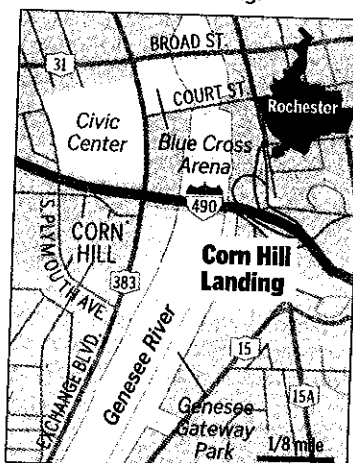
Tickets: \$18 (must be purchased in advance).

To make reservations, call (585) 262-5661. For more information, go to:

www.samandmary.org.

Cruising the river

The Mary Jemison, a riverboat dating to the 1930s, operates on the Genesee River from the south end of Corn Hill Landing.



Staff graphic

career in the hospitality industry. He lived the past 2½ years in the Park Avenue neighborhood but said he wanted a newer residence, liked the community atmosphere of Corn Hill Landing and the chance to support downtown.

"Historically, people are moving away from downtown," he said. "Now, you have things that are trying to bring people, the younger generation, back down here. ... It's going to bring money back into the city."



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