Welcome to the Tip to Tip Trail. This trail is an easy walk with a round trip length of four kilometers, taking about one hour to complete. Numerous trail markers along the path go with the following texts. They highlight features along the trail that were either influenced by or important in the construction of the Rideau Canal. Please be sure not to disturb plants and wildlife you may encounter.

**Step No. 1: A Changed Environment**

The canal channel you are walking beside did not exist before the Rideau Canal was built. The channel was originally a natural depression in the rivulet, known locally as the "Oxford Eype". Colonel By excavated the area around the day to build this embankment. This was done to prevent water from the canal channel from entering the natural river course.

The eastern white cedar growing in the forest here is a tree species well suited to this area of moist soils and limestone rock. It is typical of many wetland forest habitats along the canal.

**Step No. 2: Surveying a New Land**

Before the canal could be constructed, maps and surveys of the area had to be made. Some of the forests along the route were so thick that standard surveying techniques of taking sightings and bearings could not be used. The surveys had to be invented new techniques. One was to find a tree on a high point of land and sit on its top at right to take a bearing. This was the boundary marker from the Ordinance Department was the method used to mark boundaries of crown lands along the canal. The broad arrow on the side was the department's symbol. The Romans numerals on the top of the trees were used to identify their location on the Ordinance Department's property maps.

**Step No. 3: The Founding of Burritts Rapids**

Welcome to the village of Burritts Rapids. It was first settled in 1793 by Colonel Stephen Burritt, a United Empire Loyalist from Vermont. After the American Revolution, many Loyalists fled the United States to Canada. Many of them received land grants and settled along the Rideau and Catawba Rivers. Colonel Burritt was attracted to this site because of the water power from the rapids, which could be used to operate a sawmill. When Colonel By surveyed the canal in 1856, there was already a small village here.

**Step No. 4: Bridges and Bridgemasters**

The excavation of the canal channel made it necessary to build a bridge to accommodate both vessels and troops. Several bridges have been here since 1836. The present steel truss swing bridge was installed in 1868.

The bridge is opened to turning a canoe at the post at the end of the bridge. Counters weights and a set of iron wheels mounted on a circular track underneath allow the bridge to be swung open with little effort. The bridge across the street was originally the bridge master’s home, and was used as the bridge office during the canal’s navigation season earlier in the century. Swinging the bridge is done by lock staff today.

**Step No. 5: From Woodland to Wetland**

To make a navigable waterway between Kingston and Ottawa, Colonel By had to raise water levels along the canal to flood out the rapids, waterfalls, and small areas of land. This in turn is an example of the variety of wetlands created along the Rideau Canal following construction.

Wetlands are important for many reasons. They provide habitats for many plants and animals. During periods of high water levels, wetlands act like giant sponges, holding water and helping to prevent flooding. They also filter out sediments and pollutants from the water. Because of the wetlands’ importance, the whole area of the watersheds is protected, Parks Canada regulates and manages the Rideau Canal to help protect them.

**Step No. 6: Controlling the River Flow**

Most of the water for the Rideau Canal comes from a number of natural lakes. The flow of water from these lakes and along the canal is controlled by a series of weirs and dams. Like Colonel By over 170 years ago, Parks Canada continues to maintain and operate the Rideau Canal by adjusting the number of stop logs in the dams. These water levels are regulated to meet a wide variety of needs, from navigation and natural habitat conservation, to hydro-electric and municipal water supplies.

**Step No. 7: The Tip**

It took only six years to construct the Rideau Canal. The canal’s effects on the human and natural history of the surrounding area are irrevocable. It changed the natural environment it passed through and affected the lives of the settlers who were already here. It brought new settlers and commerce into areas which had been nothing but forests and wild rivers. New towns and cities were created and the area thrived.

For your safety, please stay on trail as indicated. No exceptions to these rules.

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**Legend:**

- L = Lock
- A = Access to Lock
- B = Bridge
- R = Rapids
- C = Church
- H = Glacial Erratic

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Illustrations: Brenda Carter, Jason Ryo

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