



**For Immediate Release: July 2, 2025**

## **NEW YORK STATE BRIDGE AUTHORITY MARKS 90 YEARS OF THE RIP VAN WINKLE BRIDGE**

***Announces 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Skywalk Arts Festival and  
90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on September 20, 2025***

***[Call for Artists](#) and Motorcade Participation***

The New York State Bridge Authority (NYSBA) today marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, celebrating nearly a century of service to the Hudson Valley and the Capital Region. This momentous occasion will be commemorated on September 20, 2025 in conjunction with the **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Skywalk Arts Festival**, a celebration of local art, culture, and community set against the stunning backdrop of the Hudson River.

To honor the anniversary, commemorative banners have been installed across the bridge, celebrating its enduring legacy and role as a regional landmark.

**Bridge Authority Executive Director Dr. Minosca Alcantara said**, “The Rip Van Winkle Bridge is a treasured landmark, serving as a gateway to the Catskill Mountains and the Upper Hudson Valley, and a vital link in the Hudson River Skywalk. We look forward to celebrating this historic milestone with the community later this year.”

**Bridge Authority Board of Commissioners Chair Joan McDonald said**, “The Rip Van Winkle Bridge holds a unique place in the Bridge Authority’s history, as its construction helped catalyze the Authority’s formation in 1932. We are proud to celebrate 90 years of this iconic span and invite the public to join us in honoring its past and future.”

### **Celebrating 90 Years: September 20, 2025**

The Bridge Authority is excited to celebrate the bridge’s 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the Skywalk Arts Festival on the Catskill side of the bridge! As part of the festivities, a special ceremonial motorcade featuring vehicles from across the decades will cross the bridge, bringing history to life in a memorable tribute.

**Be a Part of History:** Those interested in participating in the motorcade should email [NYSBAEvents@nysba.ny.gov](mailto:NYSBAEvents@nysba.ny.gov) with the subject line “RVWB Motorcade.” Space is limited and preference will be given to antique or unique automobiles.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Skywalk Arts Festival

Now in its ninth year, the Skywalk Arts Festival, continues to celebrate the region’s vibrant artistic and cultural legacy. Originally created and run for its first eight years by Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley, it has steadily grown into a beloved community event. The festival showcases the work of local artists and artisans, offering visitors a chance to explore handmade goods and learn more about the area’s rich heritage and history—all framed by breathtaking Hudson River views. Nearby, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Olana State Historic Site will have programs and tours, offering opportunities to explore art and history even further that day.

### **Festival Details:**

**Location:** 99 NY-23, Catskill, NY (Catskill side of the bridge).

**Time:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Date:** Saturday, September 20

**Call for Artists:** Artists and photographers interested in exhibiting work that reflects the Hudson Valley’s landscapes or bridges may apply [here](#). There is no fee to participate, but space is limited.

**Kathryn Burke, Director of Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley, said,** “It’s wonderful news that the Skywalk Arts Festival, begun by Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley years ago, will celebrate its ninth year this September! It’s grown to be a great showcase for local artists, a fun family event, on the beautiful grounds of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, and located in the ‘birthplace of American art.’ Be sure to stop by for the Festival and to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge with the people of the New York State Bridge Authority who are responsible for safely connecting the Hudson Valley!”

Additional festival details will be announced on the NYSBA website, [www.nysba.ny.gov](http://www.nysba.ny.gov), and via the Authority’s social media platforms (@NYSBridge).

## **A Bridge with a Storied Past**

While not the first long span bridge over the Hudson River, the Rip Van Winkle Bridge played a pivotal role in the region’s development. Following the openings of the Bear Mountain and Mid-Hudson Bridges, leaders from the Catskill and Hudson areas advocated for a crossing to connect Greene and Columbia Counties.

In 1931, Assemblyman Ellis Bentley introduced a bill to fund the span, but it was vetoed by Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt due to fiscal constraints during the Great Depression.

Instead, Governor Roosevelt proposed the creation of a state entity empowered to issue bonds repaid by toll revenue—an idea that laid the groundwork for the New Deal. The New York State Bridge Authority was established on March 31, 1932, and soon secured \$3.4 million from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to fund the construction of a bridge between Catskill and Hudson.

The bridge was officially dedicated on July 2, 1935, by Governor Herbert H. Lehman, with celebrations on both shores and thousands in attendance as part of the City of Hudson's sesquicentennial celebration.

Named for the legendary character in Washington Irving's 1819 tale, the Rip Van Winkle Bridge pays homage to a beloved regional figure. The bridge's namesake, who famously slept through the American Revolution, remains a symbol of the area's cultural heritage, frequently featured in public art and community events.

### **Hudson River Skywalk**

Completed in 2019, the Hudson River Skywalk is a six-mile round-trip scenic walkway connecting the historic homes and studios of Hudson River School artists Thomas Cole ([Thomas Cole National Historic Site](#)) and Frederic Church ([Olana State Historic Site](#)) via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. The Hudson River Skywalk offers panoramic views of the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains, inspiring deeper appreciation for the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Visitors are also encouraged to explore the nearby downtowns of Hudson and Catskill for dining, shopping, and lodging.

**Maura O'Shea, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, said,** "The Hudson River Skywalk, linking Thomas Cole and his student Frederic Church via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, connects local residents and visitors alike with the extraordinary natural vistas of New York that these Hudson River School painters made famous. We're thrilled to celebrate this important anniversary of the Bridge, which is happening in conjunction with another big celebration, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Cole's first trip to this very site in 1825, a trip that changed American art."

**Sean Sawyer, President of The Olana Partnership, said,** "The Olana Partnership looks forward to celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge at September's Skywalk Arts Festival. The bridge forms a vital connection for our region and continues the historic legacy of Thomas Cole and Frederic Church in bringing the natural beauty of the Hudson Valley and Catskills to the world."

More information about the Hudson River Skywalk, can be found at [www.hudsonriverskywalk.org](http://www.hudsonriverskywalk.org).

### **About the New York State Bridge Authority**

The New York State Bridge Authority operates five Hudson River crossings—Bear Mountain, Newburgh-Beacon, Mid-Hudson, Kingston-Rhinecliff and Rip Van Winkle—

and performs maintenance work on the Walkway Over the Hudson pedestrian bridge. The Authority receives no maintenance or operating funding from state or federal tax dollars. Nearly all revenue is generated through tolls and reinvested in capital improvements, ensuring the long-term safety and sustainability of these critical infrastructure assets of the Hudson Valley for generations to come.

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