



# Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

*Newsletter*  
*April 1998*

*Welcome to the first of what we hope will be a series of Aqueduct newsletters with past history, recent happenings, and upcoming activities. We invite your input and assistance.*

## **Putting the Arch Back in Archville**

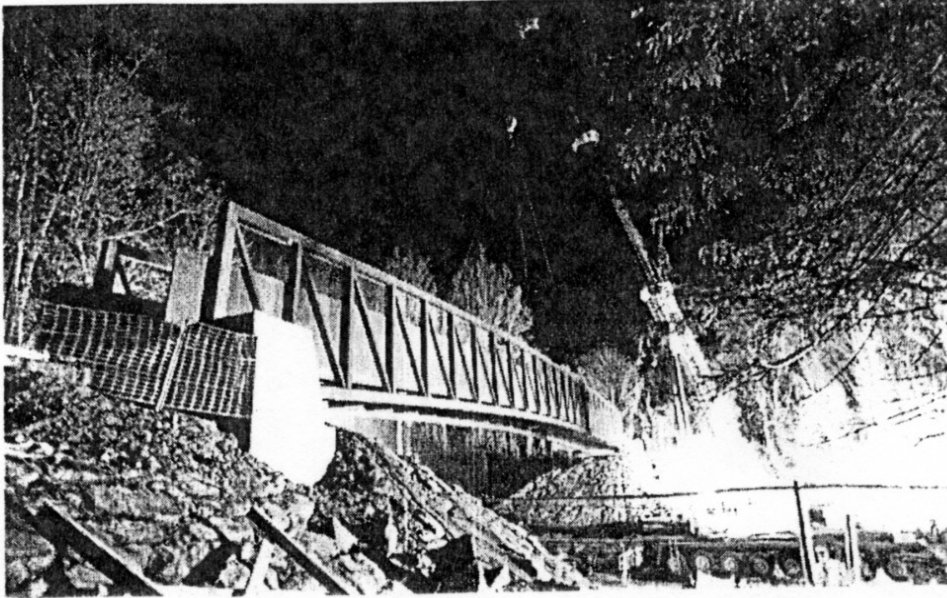
We're rejoicing over a beautiful new bridge over Route 9, a bridge to get trail hikers and bikers safely from the trail at Archville to the side where the trail continues into Scarborough, or vice versa. On a late weekend in November you might have seen the huge crane working from a former Russian missile-launching vehicle - yes, indeed - like a scene out of a James Bond movie. To pinpoint the spot from the highway, it's just north of IBM's Mount Pleasant campus. Look up - it's high!

The new bridge opens up a section of the trail that hasn't been used for more than 70 years, since the original, massive aqueduct arch for which Archville was named was taken down as a traffic hazard. The bridge offers access to 50 acres on the west side of Route 9 recently donated to the Rockefeller State Park Preserve by the Rockefeller family. The family also covered 20 percent of the cost of the bridge, so we're doubly thankful.

Apart from safety and convenience along this dangerous stretch of roadway, the bridge also affords us some extraordinary views of the river and reestablishes the integrity of the trail as it was before 1926. The official opening will be in the spring. We'll keep you posted. (Photo, next page)

## **Work in Progress**

**Update on the Overseer's House.** If you're wondering what's been happening, here's the story. The volunteers have continued work on some of the windows but since there is no heat or electricity in the house, it's almost impossible to work inside during the winter months. Fortunately, the contract for removal



New bridge  
being installed

of asbestos has been approved, a step in the right direction. The volunteers will resume outside work in the spring.

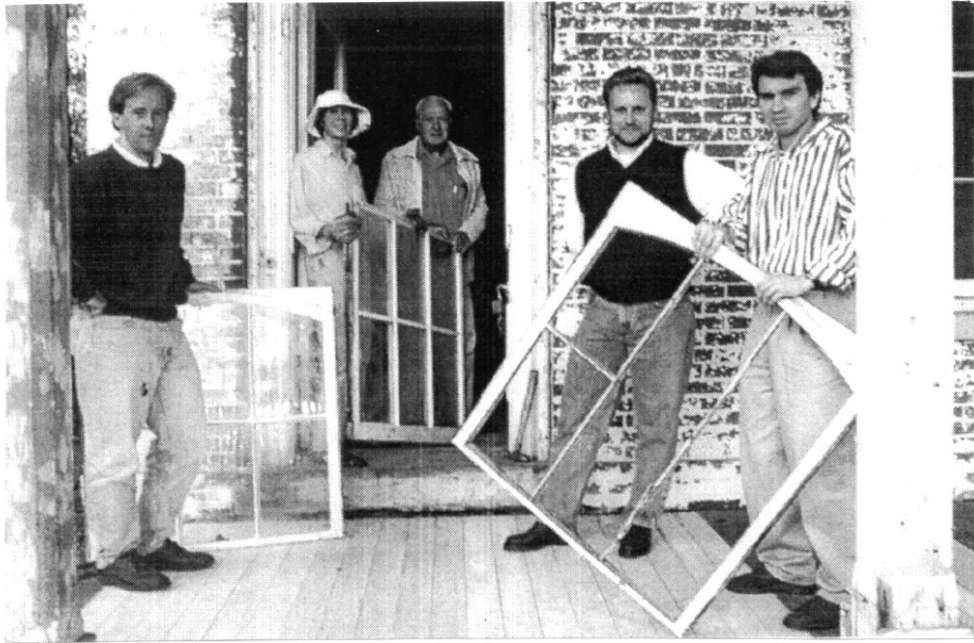
*Overseer's Garden:* Maybe you've noticed that the property west of the house has been cleared. It was formerly the garden of the Aqueduct overseer and we have great hopes of beautifying it as a place that everyone can enjoy and where out-of-breath runners can rest. One thought is for an old-fashioned vegetable garden. If that appeals to you please sign up to help (see p. 7). It's enjoyable work and as healthy as jogging.

Last month Brian Goodman, the state's Historic Site Manager for the Trailway, had a brain-storming session to generate ideas for the end use of the house. It consisted of people deeply interested in the Aqueduct who could approach the subject from different areas of expertise. More about this in subsequent newsletters.

**Map Report.** There is steady progress on the map of Old Croton Trailway State Park being created as an all-volunteer effort by the Friends. We expect to have a draft of the full, 9 x 39-inch map ready for field-checking shortly. If all goes as planned, the full-color map and guide, in an accordion-folded format convenient for trail users to consult along the way, will be ready by summer. A generous grant from the Furthermore Fund will be used for the costs of production.

## High Bridge 150th Anniversary

Mark your May calendar if you are interested in getting out on the High Bridge, between the Bronx and Manhattan, one of the most celebrated elements of the



Volunteers (l. to r.)  
Alex Morris, Mavis  
Cain, Pierre Michel,  
Doug Emilio, and  
James Bush at work  
at the Overseer's  
House

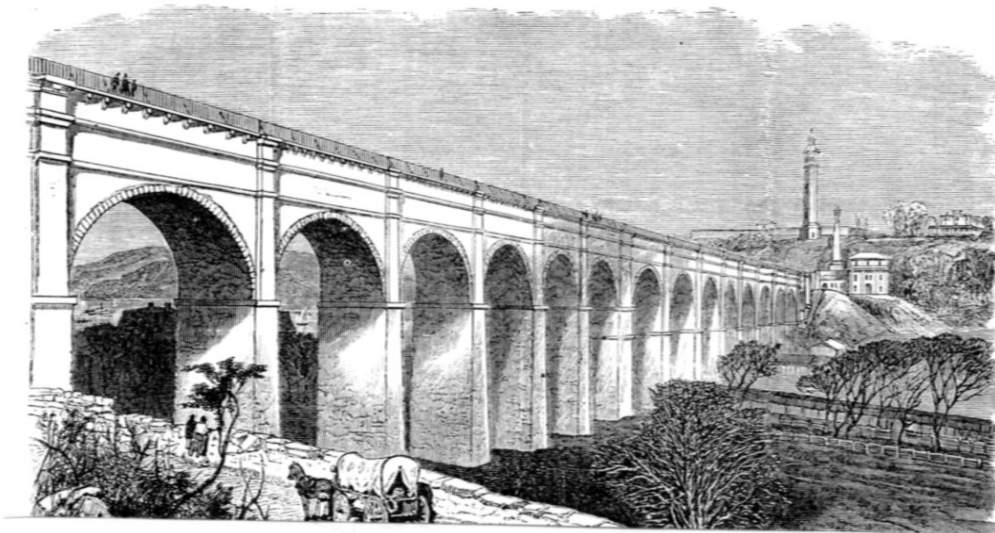
Old Croton Aqueduct system. The Urban Park Rangers of New York City Parks & Recreation will mark the 150th anniversary of the bridge's completion with several events on **May 16 and 17**. A guided walk on May 16 will lead participants along the Aqueduct pathway in the Bronx and then onto the bridge, which has been closed to the public for many years. On May 17 the Rangers will conduct a tour of Highbridge Park at the Manhattan end of the bridge, including a visit to the top of Highbridge Tower, the Romanesque-style structure many see from the Hudson Line train.

On its route from northern Westchester to Manhattan, Croton water was carried across the Harlem River on the High Bridge through iron pipes. Modeled after the great Roman aqueduct bridges, the High Bridge was completed in 1848, six years after the system opened. (In the interim, a temporary route at water level was used.) Its construction followed years of debate about whether the Aqueduct should take a high or low route across the river. The landmark bridge provides spectacular views; in its day it was a favorite subject for artists and a popular spot for promenades and country outings. High Bridge Tower was added to the system in 1872.

For further information about May 16-17 events call the Urban Park Rangers at 212-304-2365.

### The Aqueduct in the schools . . .

A NY Times article, on Nov. 26, 1997, told how now-retired Ossining middle school social studies teacher Carl Oechsner used the Aqueduct as a teaching tool for many years:



The High Bridge and  
High Bridge Tower

"Current students readily pass up soccer games or trips to the mall to spend Saturdays on the trail atop the huge pipe that was New York City's first public water supply. Former students, who have forgotten most of what they learned in middle school, can still recount how this engineering marvel, built between 1837 and 1842 by Irish immigrants, turned the city from a Hogarthian place to live, beset by fire and cholera, to a great metropolis. . . .

"They learned how waves of immigrants arrived on these shores for pick and shovel labor and brought new religions, like Catholicism, with them. They learned that the government was allowed to seize private land for public works projects under the law of eminent domain. They learned of the workaholic habits of the engineer who built the aqueduct, John B. Jervis, away from his wife for four years, writing her 2,567 love letters, but too involved in his work to come home during the fatal illness of their child."

**. . . and in the arts:** In its fall '97 semester the Inter-Village Continuing Education Program offered a one-session outing called "Writing on the Trail," taught by writer and English teacher Nicole Grieco Butterfield. Participants were invited to "walk the trail at a leisurely pace, stopping to observe and write about both natural and man-made sights." And at the Upstream Gallery in Dobbs Ferry, one of the featured exhibits in December was "One View, Many Visions: The Aqueduct," a four-season exploration by local artist Eleanor Goldstein of the Aqueduct in the Pinecrest section of Hastings.

### Madame C.J. Walker Stamp

Aqueduct walkers may have noticed the back of a handsome white mansion on the east side of the trail in Irvington. This is Villa Lewaro, built by Sarah (Madame



C.J.) Walker, one of the first self-made millionairesses in the US. A commemorative stamp of Mme. Walker was recently issued by the US Postal Service as part of its Black Heritage series, with the first day of issue ceremony at the Irvington Post Office. Located at the corner of Broadway and Fargo Lane, the home - now a private residence - was given its name by Sarah Walker's friend Enrico Caruso.

### Help Needed! A Friends Coordinator

The Friends are seeking a volunteer coordinator/office manager to help ease the load of the President, respond to old and new members, and enable us to carry out more activities. *This is an ideal opportunity for someone who would like an interesting civic involvement for a few hours a week with flexible scheduling.* A Friends office will be established in the Old Croton Trailway State Park headquarters, located on the trail at Walnut Street (just west of Route 9) in Dobbs Ferry. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please drop President Fred Charles a note at the Friends' address, or call Charlotte Fahn at 478-3961 or Mavis Cain at 693-0529.

We are also on the lookout for **volunteers** to handle an occasional mailing, help with events and publicity, and continue work this spring on the Overseer's House in Dobbs Ferry. We also need people to represent the Friends at their local community street fairs in the spring - giving out literature about the trail and signing up new members. Please get in touch if you're interested in helping with any of these or other efforts. Thanks!



Awareness Day at the Overseer's House

## Calendar Notes

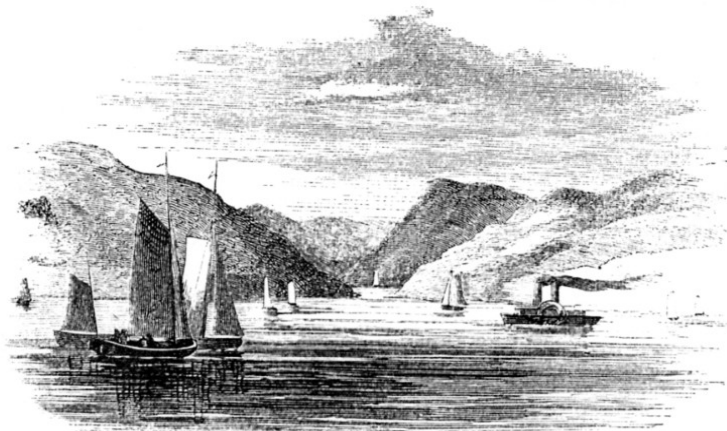
- ▶ **May 16-17. High Bridge 150th anniversary events.**
- ▶ **May 31. Visit to the Ossining Weir, sponsored by the Beczak Environmental Center of Yonkers. Call 376-0859 for information.**

### **\* Slide lectures about the trail \***

Would a school or organization in your community like an illustrated talk about the Aqueduct and Trailway? If so, call Trail Manager Brian Goodman at 693-5259.

### **?? Query ??**

Does anyone remember any of the Overseers or their family members from the Dobbs Ferry house? If you have any recollections of the Overseers or house, please contact Brian Goodman at 693-5259.



THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS.—SOURCE OF THE CROTON.

## Thank You from the President

Dear Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct:

Our thanks go out to all who have contributed their time, talents, money and goodwill to the support of Old Croton Trailway State Park - the Aqueduct. The growth of the Friends shows how valued this urban-suburban-exurban trail is to those who use and cherish it. Many hundreds of volunteer hours have enabled us to receive promises of greater state assistance and a Furthermore Fund grant for the Aqueduct map project. We have also received two \$1,000 grants, one from the Musser Fund for the Overseer's House rehabilitation and the other, from an anonymous source, for general support.

The contributions of professionals have propelled our projects: mapmaker Robert Romagnoli and map project coordinator Charlotte Fahn; designers Andy Simons and Helene Bennedetti of Emphas!s; Sarah Knox's hand-drawn "temporary" map; Ed Brody of BBD&O for copy services and computer hardware; Robert Rayne of Reader's Digest for computer repair; the ongoing efforts of Doug Emilio and Mavis Cain at the Overseer's House and of Joe Kozlowsky on the Yonkers section of the trail. Lastly, the extraordinary support of one couple, Fred and Louise Hubbard, deserves recognition. Their passion for the trail has been reflected both financially and through Fred's botanical inventory of one stretch of the trail.

The multiplier effect of contributions to the trail is working - thank you!

Fred Charles, President  
Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

### Be a Friend!

Your tax-deductible contribution helps to protect, preserve and promote the trail.

- ☐ Friend \$10    ☐ Good Friend \$50    ☐ Best Friend \$100    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Additional donation to Overseer's House Fund \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (eve) \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to volunteer. Area of interest \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to **Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct**. And see if your organization has a matching funds program. Do call us if you have any questions or suggestions at 914-693-5259.

## The Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

is a voluntary, non-partisan, non-profit organization formed to protect, preserve and promote the Old Croton Trailway State Park. The purpose of the Friends is to educate the Public about the National Historic Landmark, and to provide planning and protection by securing appropriate financial and governmental support so that the Aqueduct shall remain in perpetuity the unspoiled 26-mile recreational greenway which spans from Croton-on-Hudson, through the rivertowns of Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, the Tarrytowns, Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson to Yonkers.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Inc.

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