



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter
No. 4, September 1999

Aqueduct Declared a State Historic Park

Standing in front of the Overseer's House at park headquarters in Dobbs Ferry on May 14th, a perfect spring morning, Winthrop ("Wint") Aldrich, Deputy State Parks Commissioner for Historic Preservation, declared the Aqueduct a State Historic Park.

Since 1968, when the 26.2 miles of the Aqueduct between the New Croton Dam and the Yonkers-New York City line came under the state's jurisdiction, the historic water tunnel together with the trail on top of it has been named Old Croton Trailway State Park. While the new name, Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, will take a bit of practice before it rolls off the tongue, it happily includes the word "Aqueduct," the park's key feature that was noticeably missing from the former name.

Most importantly, the new designation brings fresh emphasis to the park's triple role as an historic, natural, and recreational resource, and may eventually help in securing additional resources. "We have a wonderful story to tell," said Historic Site Manager Brian Goodman. "This is a great opportunity for the future." There are only three other Historic Parks in the state.

In his remarks, Commissioner Aldrich applied John Ruskin's aphorism to the Aqueduct: "when love and skill work together, expect a masterwork." Noting that this is a complicated resource to manage, he stressed that the state needs and

is grateful for all the help that users and the public at large are able to offer.

Among those attending the ceremony were Ralph Odell, a member of the Taconic Regional Commission of State Parks; Jayne McLaughlin, current Taconic Regional Director, and former Regional Director John Kennedy; John Lovell, Deputy Director of State Parks' Bureau of Historic Sites; State Assembly member Michael Spano; Robert Elliot, Mayor of Croton-on-Hudson and head of Historic River Towns of Westchester; Richard Halevy representing Yonkers' Mayor John Spencer; and Brian Monahan, Mayor of Dobbs Ferry. A lively group of students from Dobbs Ferry Middle School represented



Commissioner Aldrich and Brian Goodman taking wraps off park's new name sign. (Photo courtesy of The Journal News; Alicia Maxey, photographer.)



Ralph Odell, member of Taconic Regional Commission, and Jayne McLaughlin, State Park's Taconic Regional Director.



Dobbs Ferry middle schoolers enjoying the food and festivities.

the next generation, thanks to teacher Ellyce Cavanaugh.

Also notably present was Linda Gilbert Cooper, author of *Walker's Guide to the Old Croton Aqueduct*, the parchment-colored history and guide first published by the state in 1986 and still, with 60,000 copies in print, one of the most popular Aqueduct publications available. Ms. Cooper is now Town Supervisor for Yorktown.

Visitors to park headquarters at 15 Walnut St. in Dobbs Ferry will be pleasantly surprised to see the improvements made there in time for the May 14th events. The trailer and "new barn" are now green as a result of fresh coats of paint. Friends members Mavis Cain, Gwen Thomas, and Holly Daly are owed great thanks for the beautiful new plantings. The Taconic Outdoor Education Center provided delicious refreshments for the occasion.

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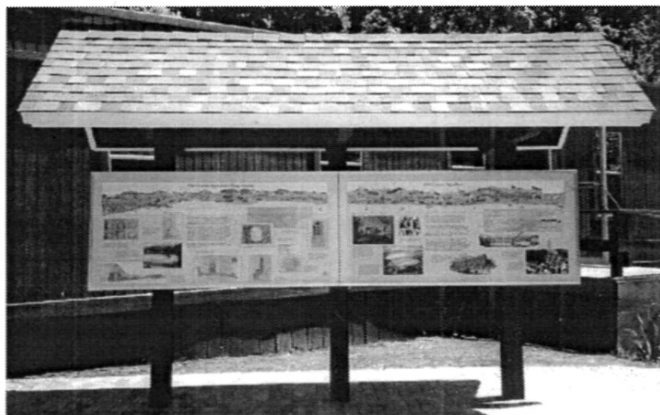
New Aqueduct Signs Unveiled

Many Aqueduct walkers are unaware of the trail's unique history. Others pass the Walnut Street intersection in Dobbs Ferry a bit mystified by the cluster of structures there. The new signs unveiled on May 14th by Deputy State Parks Commissioner Winthrop Aldrich and Historic Site Manager Brian Goodman should enlighten trail users on both scores.

One sign, placed close to the street, announces in bold letters the park's new name - Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park. The other consists of a pair of full color, 36 x 72" interpretive panels, mounted under an inviting new kiosk next to the trailer that serves as park headquarters. The readable, concise text, beautifully illustrated, explains why New York City needed a new water supply, how the Aqueduct met that need, and some of the basics of the tunnel's remarkable engineering.

The two panels, mounted side by side, are graphically connected by a pictorial map of the Aqueduct's route to the High Bridge over the Harlem River, showing some of the natural and built features and communities along the way. This small but informative outdoor exhibit would make a fine teaching tool, combined with a walk on the trail and a look at the Overseer's House, also at Walnut Street.

The interpretive signs were created by Greg Smith and Dennis Bove, members of State Park's talented Graphic Design staff at the Bureau of Historic Sites, Peeble's Island (near Albany), under Director James Gold. Funding for the signs was provided by the Bureau with a contribution from the Hudson Valley Greenway Conservancy. Recognition is owed to Brian Goodman, who initiated and nurtured the project for nine months and worked with the Peeble's Island staff to see it through to completion. The new signs are part of a long-term signage plan for the park. Come see them!



The new interpretative signs at park headquarters, explaining the history and engineering of the Aqueduct. Photos by C. Fahn.

Yonkers History Tour

On Sunday, October 17th, there will be a "Turn of the [Last] Century Tour" by trolley bus of 11 historic mansions and sites in Yonkers. Lenoir Preserve, Untermyer Park, Philipse Manor Hall, and the Hudson River Museum, all on or near the Aqueduct, are included.

The cost is \$10 per person; reservations are required. For information, or to help out at a site, call the Yonkers Historical Society at 914-965-0401.



Cyclists! Please ring your bell to alert trail walkers ahead of you.



Aqueduct Awareness Day: Save the Date!

The Friends' annual autumn Aqueduct Awareness Day will take place this year on **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23RD** (rain date: October 24th). The Ossining weir will be open for guided tours in the morning, with refreshments, displays, music, and perhaps a few surprises scheduled for the afternoon at park headquarters in Dobbs Ferry. Hastings residents Marge and Dan Schlitt, of the Sierra Club, will lead an Aqueduct hike from Greystone to Tarrytown. A flyer will be coming to you with more details closer to the date.

Tunnel Inspection: A Follow-up

The article in our last issue about tunnel inspection procedures opened with an historical perspective: "When the Aqueduct was fully in use, engineers conducted regular inspections of the inside by boat, a journey not for the faint-hearted."

By happy coincidence, members Mavis Cain and Gwen Thomas, while sorting through files in the Friends' office, recently came upon an illustration that gives a

vivid glimpse of what this process entailed. They found a photocopy, reproduced below, of what appears to be a period woodcut showing two inspectors distinctly *not* equipped in regulation OSHA gear, arduously making their way back up the tunnel. We would appreciate any leads from our readers on the whereabouts of an original print, or any identifying information.



"Local Inspection of Croton Aqueduct -- The Return Against the Current."

Mavis' Sweatshop Scores as Temperature Soars

On three sweltering summer Saturdays, 12 volunteers rallied to storm the "window project" on the Overseer's House. A *succes fou* as volunteer Pierre Michel said. The house now has eyes in the back and it's come alive. Bill Logan and Douglas Emilio guided less skilled hands through sanding, glazing and sash replacing.

It's amazing what good work is done by people who claim to be all thumbs. David Yahner of Pleasantville and Holly Daly of Dobbs Ferry can now add "skilled glazer and putty-er" to their resumes. With amazing expertise Taylor Pape cut glass to fit the curves of the upper windows. A word of praise from Bill or Doug kept the energy up as the sweat poured down. And the satisfied feeling at the end of a long day on August 14 made it all worthwhile.



Pierre Michel, Webb Moniz and Bill Logan – hanging in!

The fence, too, got some fresh paint on the first Saturday. And the porch got a new garden bed. Margaret Midgley from Briarcliff Manor trundled five barrows of top soil from north of the trailer over to the house. And that's serious weightlifting! Sujata Vidyasagar from Sleepy Hollow planted black-eyed Susans and pachysandra. All of these projects keep the house looking cared for, if not lived in, and that keeps down vandalism.

At the end of the hottest Saturday, Webb Moniz of Armonk, newly adept at replacing window sashes, asked "When does Mavis' sweatshop meet again?" (As many of you know, Mavis Cain and Gwen Thomas are the recruiters for volunteers.) The next workday will be in the autumn. The day begins around 10 am and ends about 2 p.m. But the hours are flexible. Cookies and cold



Martin Skrelumas building an information box. Photos by Doug Emilio.

drinks are always served -- inelegantly -- on the front porch.

Many members who couldn't make it these last few times said, "Please ask me another time." We will.

Friends Testify at Seton Manor Hearing in Yonkers

The Friends offered comments at a June 22nd Yonkers City Council hearing on the 250-unit senior residential facility called Seton Manor. This project is proposed for the seven acres of the Iona College property bordering Broadway and the north side of Odell Avenue. It is across from the nursing home now being built by St. John's Hospital on the south side of Odell. Both project sites are on top of a steep slope above the east side of the Aqueduct, an area plagued by drainage and runoff problems.

The Friends recommended a baseline survey of the condition of the 137-year-old masonry Aqueduct tunnel prior to construction and a comprehensive drainage study of this entire area, extending well north and south of the project site. There is a potential for the trail staying wetter for longer periods of time as a result of increased runoff unless plans for sewers take cumulative effects from other projects into account.

The testimony pointed out that increased traffic from the projects on Odell Ave., which makes a sharp, sloping turn just where it is crossed by the trail, could mean increased risk for trail users. Planners were also urged to consider view impacts in winter as well as when the trees are leafed out, and to minimize views from the Aqueduct of all structures, paved areas, and traffic in all seasons.

Engineering Help Needed

From time to time, building projects are proposed with the potential for having physical impacts on the Aqueduct and trail, often involving issues of drainage and runoff. In order for the Friends to come to an informed position on such projects, we are seeking volunteers with professional engineering and/or construction expertise who could occasionally visit a site and evaluate the potential effects and alternatives. If you can help, please call the Friends at 914-693-4117.



Four-in-hand coming over the new Aqueduct bridge at Archville.

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

BE A FRIEND!!

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> New Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Best Friend \$100 |

Please make check payable to *Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct*. Send it with this coupon and your name, address, and day and evening telephone numbers to the Friends at Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109.

For map information or to volunteer, call us at 914-693-4117. Questions or suggestions? Call 914-693-5259.

Aqueduct News / In Brief

Ossining's Third Double Arch Trail Race

was held on Saturday, June 12th, kicking off the annual village fair. The 5-km route starts near the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, next to the trail, follows the Aqueduct through the grounds of the Dominican Sisters, Mariandale, and returns to the village center, passing the Double Arch bridge and Ossining weir. The event is a fundraiser for a new Ossining track. . . . **Two big trees fell directly across the trail** near Fraser Place in Hastings in mid-June. Thanks are owed to Rabbi Edward Schechter, who lives next to the trail at that point and helped facilitate removal of the trees. . . .

Doggie Doos and Don'ts: A Guide to Aqueduct Etiquette for Dogs and their Owners

is the title of a concise and informative brochure prepared by member Gwen Thomas. Call the Friends (914-693-4117) if you would like a copy, or several. . . . **The attractive all-weather frame** displaying the "poster" version of the Friends' award-winning map/guide on the headquarters trailer in Dobbs Ferry is the handiwork of member Doug Emilio. Thanks to Doug, trail users passing the spot now have a trail map for ready reference. . . . **We now**

have a photographic "before" record of the Aqueduct in Hastings where a 15-unit clustered housing project ("Riverpointe") is being built east of the trail. An appreciative thanks goes to photographer David Knox, a member of the Friends, for taking the handsome series of photos. . . . **A slide lecture about the Aqueduct** was presented by Brian Goodman at Marymount College in June to 150 foreign students preparing to enter American universities in the fall, and to a private group of 75 from the Princeton, NJ, area in July.

Send your Aqueduct news to the Friends!

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

is a private, non-profit, non-partisan volunteer organization formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton Aqueduct (Old Croton Aqueduct Historic State Park). The Aqueduct, completed in 1842, provided New York City with its first public supply of clean drinking water. It is a National Historic Landmark, one of the great engineering achievements of the 19th century. Old Croton Aqueduct Historic State Park encompasses the portion of the Aqueduct located in Westchester County. From the New Croton Dam to the new York City line it spans 26.2 miles, linking the Hudson River communities of Croton-on-Hudson, Cortlandt, Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson and Yonkers. The Friends work to raise public awareness of the Aqueduct and trail, and to secure the resources that will enable this historic greenway to remain unspoiled in perpetuity.



From *New York Walk Book*, 1998, NY-NJ Trail Conference, New York, NY

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Inc.
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