



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter
No. 6, June 2000

Connecting to the Aqueduct: Yonkers Promenade To Create Scenic Loop with Trail

Yonkers has been granted \$1.8 million in federal funds toward transforming a section of Warburton Avenue overlooking the Hudson into a scenic promenade. The promenade connects in three places with the Aqueduct trailway, creating a nearly two-mile-long walking loop.

The plan, developed by the Yonkers Planning Department and supported by the Taconic Region of State Parks, creatively takes advantage of the site's fine views, rugged topography, existing parks, excellent access by train and bus, and proximity to the Aqueduct. It should help draw walkers to the area's wealth of natural and cultural features, including Lenoir Nature Preserve and the Hudson River Museum. It demonstrates how the rivertowns can use connections to the Aqueduct imaginatively in developing their own trail systems.

Governor Pataki came to Yonkers to announce the grant at a news conference with Mayor John Spencer on March 24th in Hudson-Fulton Park. This small park will mark the north end of the new promenade, connecting with the Aqueduct along Odell Avenue. Otis Park, a playground, marks the south end. Stone pillars across from Otis Park will be restored; from these an old path will be rehabilitated to make a southern connection to the Aqueduct.

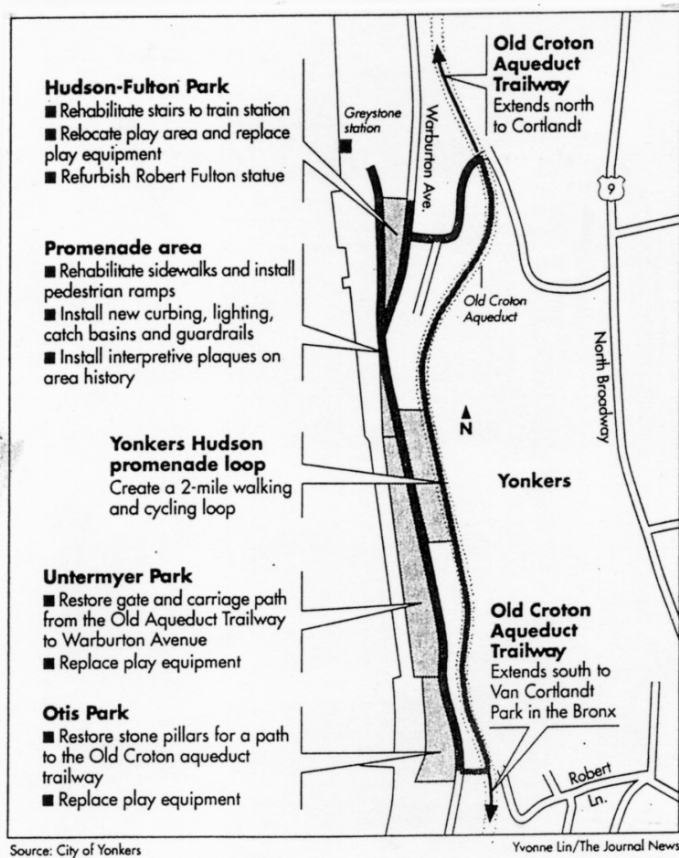
The third connector should excite those who already know or have yet to learn of the marvels of Untermyer Park. The historic estate's stone gateposts on Warburton Avenue and the carriage path that leads uphill to the Aqueduct will be refurbished. At this point on the trail the

carved Liongate marks the continuation of the carriage path up to the famed Grecian Gardens.

The part of Warburton Avenue that will become the Yonkers North Hudson Promenade sits terrace-like on a



Scenic overlook concept for North Hudson Promenade in Yonkers. (Yonkers Planning Dept.)



Plan for Yonkers North Hudson Promenade and its Aqueduct connections. (Reproduced with permission.)

densely wooded hillside about 100 feet above sea level. Now in dilapidated condition, it will be improved by new, wider sidewalks, new benches, railings and lighting, scenic overlooks, and interpretive plaques. Selective thinning of vegetation will enlarge dramatic vistas of the river and Palisades. Otis and Hudson-Fulton parks will be refurbished. Importantly, Yonkers will incorporate the land parcels along the promenade into its public park system to protect the newly enhanced views.

The Yonkers project has won funding just as other rivertowns are contemplating connections of their own trail networks to the green "spine" of the Aqueduct. Hastings' Trail Committee, working with village planner Meg Walker and Greenway Trail Director Kevin McLaughlin, has been scouting possible routes for side trails between Route 9 and the Aqueduct and from the Aqueduct toward the Hudson.

Trail walkers like nothing better than to devise walks that don't require going and coming along the same

route. The closeness of the Aqueduct to the stations of the Hudson Line already makes it possible to start a walk on the trail in one community and return from another. The Yonkers Promenade/Aqueduct loop, together with future trail connections within the villages, will only enrich the trail experience. - *Charlotte Fahn*

River Club Project: Effects on the Trail

One of the widest remaining views of the Hudson River and Palisades from the Aqueduct would be lost with a 524-rental unit housing development proposed for Yonkers, pending environmental review. River Club would be built on Warburton Ave. just north of Odell Ave. and the planned Yonkers North Hudson Promenade (see story above). A portion of the apartments would be affordable units to meet, in part, the city's federally mandated affordable housing goal.

The Friends anticipate that the project, which would include 777 parking spaces, would also add substantial traffic on Odell Ave. Odell is a narrow, sloping local street that curves just where the Aqueduct crosses it. The new nursing home being built by St. John's Hospital and possibly other new developments nearby will bring yet more traffic to Odell, while the new promenade's connection with the Aqueduct along Odell will draw more walkers, raising real concerns for pedestrian safety.

The Friends have urged that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement specifically address these trail-related issues and include simulations of winter views as they would appear to walkers with the new buildings in place.

- *Charlotte Fahn*

Friends Elect Officers and Board

At the March 23rd, 2000, meeting of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, the following officers and Board of Directors were elected.

President: Charlotte Fahn

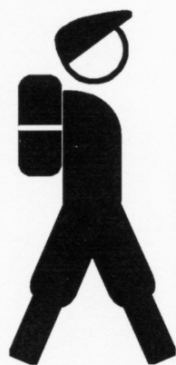
Vice-Presidents: Mavis Cain and Edward Brody

Treasurer: Constance Porter

Secretary: Meetings and Special Events - Gwen Thomas

Secretary: Membership - Holly Daly

Directors: William Cassella, Frederick Charles, Cornelia Cotton, Douglas Emilio, William Hoppen, Robert Kornfeld, Jr., Joseph Kozlowsky, William Logan, J. Webb Moniz, Karen Schatzel.



Mark Your Calendar for the Hudson River Valley Ramble Weekend!

Experienced guides with an in-depth knowledge of the Aqueduct will lead two hikes along the trail on **Saturday, September 23rd**. The hikes are part of the Hudson River Valley Ramble, an exciting program of more than 60 events scheduled for **the weekend of September 23rd and 24th**, encompassing a variety of terrain, trail types, and level of difficulty.

The walking weekend is sponsored by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area to focus attention on the landscapes and historic and cultural resources of the Hudson Valley. The Heritage Area takes in ten counties and 160 miles between the George Washington Bridge and the Albany region. Following are details of the two Aqueduct hikes.

Hike 1. Led by Marge and Dan Schlitt, starting at 10 am at Metro-North's Greystone Station. The route goes through north Yonkers, Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, and Irvington, and ends on

Route 9 after passing through Lyndhurst. It provides glimpses of the river, Main Street crossings, and views of architectural treasures. Distance: 8 miles, with opportunities along the way to leave the group and return to the starting point via train or bus.

Hike 2. Led by Nestor Danyluk, starting at 10 am from the Visitor Center in Ossining (located at the Joseph Caputo Community Center, a block north of Main St. and just east of the Aqueduct bridge). The route becomes increasingly rural and includes a crossing of the New Croton Dam and views of the Croton River Gorge. Return is via Croton Station. Distance: 8 miles including the 3-mile walk from the dam to the Croton Station; there are no public transportation opportunities en route.

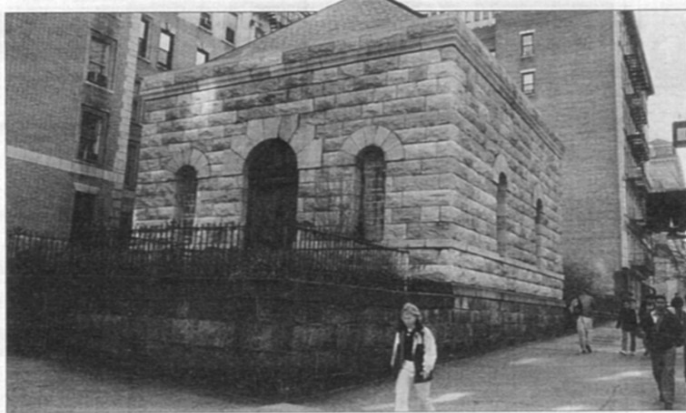
A brochure describing all the weekend walks is available from High Land Flings, organizers of the Ramble, tel. 800-453-6665. The brochure includes driving instructions.

Join a walk and celebrate the beauties of the Hudson Valley

119th St. Gatehouse Designated a Landmark

On March 28th, the New York City Landmarks Commission voted to protect the Aqueduct gatehouse at the corner of 119th St. and Amsterdam Ave. in Manhattan by officially designating it a city landmark. The building, made of granite block with a roof of slate shingles, dates from 1894, when it replaced the original 1842 gatehouse. It is one of the few remaining structures that marks the route of the Aqueduct in Manhattan as it made its way from the High Bridge over the Harlem River to the Yorkville receiving reservoir (now Central Park's Great Lawn) and finally to the distributing reservoir at Fifth Ave. and 42nd St. The gatehouse was closed in 1984. A neighbor, Ann Stark, has tended a garden next to it for 35 years.

The move to designate the gatehouse was initiated by Robert E. Roistacher, head of the Morningside Heights Residents' Association, when he heard last fall that the city was considering selling it. Robert Kornfeld, Jr., testified on behalf of Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct in strong support of the designation in December 1999



The 119th St. Aqueduct gatehouse is now a New York City landmark. (Reproduced with permission)

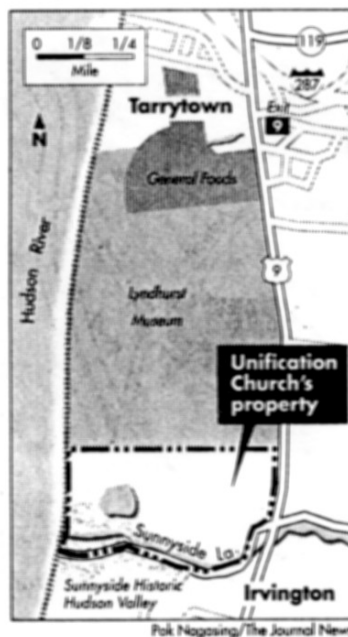
at a Commission hearing. The Friends applaud the Commission and all concerned in moving expeditiously to make the designation a reality.

Land Adjoining Trail Slated to Become County Green Space

The green and tranquil stretch of Aqueduct trail between Sunnyside and Lyndhurst is slated to be preserved permanently as open space, according to a May 24th report in *The Journal News*. The article states that Westchester County is negotiating the \$4-5 million purchase of the 39-acre woodland between the two historic estates with the Unification Church, its present owner. The parcel is the immediate neighbor on the west of this beautiful segment of the trail. The purchase would physically tie the Old Croton Aqueduct, Sunnyside, and Lyndhurst, each of which is a National Historic Landmark, in a unique cluster.

In further good news for trail walkers, the report states that the church "will place its adjoining 25-acre Belvedere Estate property off Route 9 near Sunnyside Lane under a special legal restriction, called a conservation easement, that would maintain the majority of it as open space forever." The old stone wall of Belvedere, an estate once known as Zeeview, borders the east side of the trail.

The purchase is not expected to be completed for another year. Once it is, according to the article, "the land would be designated as parkland and co-managed by Sunnyside owner Historic Hudson Valley and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns Lyndhurst." The nonprofit group Scenic Hudson organized the purchase in cooperation with Sunnyside and Lyndhurst.



(Reproduced with permission)



Save the Date! Walk the North End of the Trail

Please mark **Sunday afternoon, October 22nd**, on your calendars for a guided walk starting from the New Croton Dam in Croton Gorge Park. Participants can bring a picnic and enjoy lunch prior to the walk practically in the spray of the dam's spectacular spillway (see photo of feature no. 1 on the Friends' color map/guide). Details will be coming in the fall.

Loss of a Friend

The Friends sadly note the recent death of Mary Allison of Hastings. Mary was a historian and writer who lived close to the Aqueduct, loved it, and knew it well. She called to offer help as soon as she learned of the map project, and most generously contributed her talent and time to working on the text as it evolved.

A ventilator story Mary told offers a remembrance. Soon after coming to Hastings, she was walking on the trail and noticed two boys looking up at the ventilator shaft near Pinecrest Drive in Hastings, visibly puzzled but also impressed. She stopped to listen and heard one say to his friend, "Someone important must be buried there!" She explained the function of the tower to them, perhaps creating two new Aqueduct devotees in the process. -Ed.

LETTER: True Start of the Aqueduct

To the Editor: Thank you for excerpting my poem in your February issue. Actually the Croton Quest hikes continued beyond the (New) Croton Cornell Dam, along the reservoir, following the three submerged miles of the Old Croton Aqueduct as closely as possible, to the true beginning of the Aqueduct near Gatehouse Bridge. Small portions of the original dam are visible, and more in times of drought. The gatehouse area is "Aqueduct heaven," since the Catskill Aqueduct and the New and Old Croton aqueducts are all here.

John T. Reutershan, Bronx

Editor's note: A form of meditation. On his most recent Aqueduct walk, John covered the entire Westchester portion of the trail, and then some, *in one day*, on May 27th. He started in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx at about 6:45 am, walked to the New Croton Dam, and then on to Croton-Harmon Station. Including several extended stops, it took him 12 hours to cover the estimated 29-30 miles. This was his third all-in-one-day walk (on one he walked to Mount Kisco from the dam). John says that for him these walks are a form of meditation.

One of his encounters this time was with a deer that was at the north end of the bridge over Route 117. John was at the south end. Each started to cross and then stepped back; finally John stepped aside and the deer raced across and into Rockefeller State Park Preserve. John received friendly waves from trail neighbors whose yards he passed through, and gives accolades to Trail Manager Brian Goodman and his crew and to trail walkers -- he says the trail has never looked cleaner.



Recent Books

Robert Kornfeld, Jr.

Water for Gotham: A History. Gerard T. Koeppel. 2000, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 355pp. \$30.

Liquid Assets: A History of New York's Water System. Diane Galusha. 1999, Purple Mountain Press, Fleischmanns, NY (800-325-2665). 303 pp. \$37.

Two new books about New York's aqueduct system are in print. They are well written, filled with exciting new research, and are completely different in approach. Both will be enjoyed by a broad audience, including general readers and dyed-in-the-wool aqueduct buffs.

Water for Gotham, by Gerard Koeppel, is the most complete account to date of the epic struggle to supply pure and wholesome water to Manhattan island, from the colonial era to the completion of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Its focus is more on political, social and biographical history than engineering. The book is filled with colorful anecdotes, ranging from the antics of scoundrels and demagogues to the favorite rum drinks in the city's taverns. Koeppel's accounts of events such as the cholera epidemic of 1832 and the Croton Dam collapse of 1841 evoke the human drama with journalistic skill.

While Chief Engineer John B. Jervis has dominated recent writing on the Aqueduct, Koeppel introduces readers to other central figures. These include Myndert Van Schaick, the Old Knickerbocker philanthropist who was the visionary and father of the Croton Aqueduct, and Stephen Allen, the Water Commissioner who drove the project to completion (including firing David Douglass and hiring John Jervis).

Liquid Assets, by Diane Galusha, has a broader scope: it is an unprecedented, sweeping history of New York's water supply from the wells of the Dutch era to today's massive Water Tunnel No. 3 project, and current issues of watershed protection and filtration. While the Old Croton Aqueduct does not occupy a large portion of this book, readers will be able to understand it in the context of the final Croton system and the later aqueducts. *Liquid Assets* is profusely illustrated with black and white images.

Guidebooks

Charlotte Fahn

Trailways, Footpaths and Parks: An Environmental Approach to Enjoyment of Outdoor Spaces, Hastings-on-Hudson, Westchester County, New York. Fred H. Hubbard, PhD. 1999, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. Spiral-bound, 55 pp. plus color photographs. \$21.95. Available from Good Yarns book store, Hastings.

Four pages of this guide are devoted to parts of the Aqueduct: Pinecrest Drive to Five Corners, Edgars Lane to Minturn Ave., and a footpath between Pinecrest Parkway and the trail. The focus is on close observation and clear description of the plants and trees on the trail, a subject rarely addressed in Aqueduct guides. The author's passion for his subject quietly comes through in the finely written, well-edited text.

Paths Along the Hudson: A Guide to Walking and Biking. Jeffrey Perls. 1999, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ. Paperback. 434pp. \$20.

About 20 pages are devoted to a description of walks partly or mainly on the Aqueduct between Philipse Road in Yonkers, across from the Hudson River Museum, and the trail's crossing of Route 9 north of Beach Road in Ossining, including a number of side trips. There is considerable historic information about the communities (especially Yonkers) and sites of interest along the way, and practical information for visitors, including public transportation access.



More than 60 people attended the New York City Parks Department tour inside High Bridge Tower on May 27th and viewing of The High Bridge. Additional tours are planned. For information, call the Urban Park Rangers at the Inwood Park Ecology Center, 212-304-2365. (Photos by Brian Goodman)

Exploring the Sources of the Croton River

Ed Rondthaler, indefatigable explorer of the Croton River with his wife, Dot, delighted us again on March 5th with a slide talk about the tributaries of the Croton. This was the Friends' 2000 Winter Program, held at Phelps Memorial Hospital Center in Sleepy Hollow. Over the years, Ed and Dot have traced the river from the start of its West, Middle and East branches to its mouth at the Hudson. In this year's talk, Ed concentrated on the East Branch starting at its source, a small spring at Croton Head Farm in the Pawling, NY, area.



Ed and Dot Rondthaler, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in April. (Photo by Brian Goodman.)

From that small spring, a few slides later, we arrived at the Great Swamp of the Croton. There we saw Ed's canoe gliding through fronds and lilies, the moisture hanging in the air. It could have been the Okefenokee Swamp right out of Pogo, but this swamp is just north of Brewster. Ed advises anyone following in the wake of his paddle to check the water level on the big rock at the entrance to the swamp, to avoid being stranded in the water lilies with the prospect of wading to shore.

Another treasure was a slide of the Van Cortlandt grist mill, actually a photo of a drawing by well-known local artist Theodore Cornu. Cornu, who died in 1986, and the Rondthalers shared a love of the river, of canoeing, and a tremendous interest in preserving the beauty of the environment. The mill was situated just below Goose Island at the end of tidewater. Ed described how, during the Revolution, the flour was loaded onto barges and floated down to the patriots' troops to keep them marching "on their bellies." It later became an iron foundry and then a wire mill.



Theodore Cornu's drawing of the Van Cortlandt grist mill as it might have looked around 1780.

(Courtesy of Ed Rondthaler)

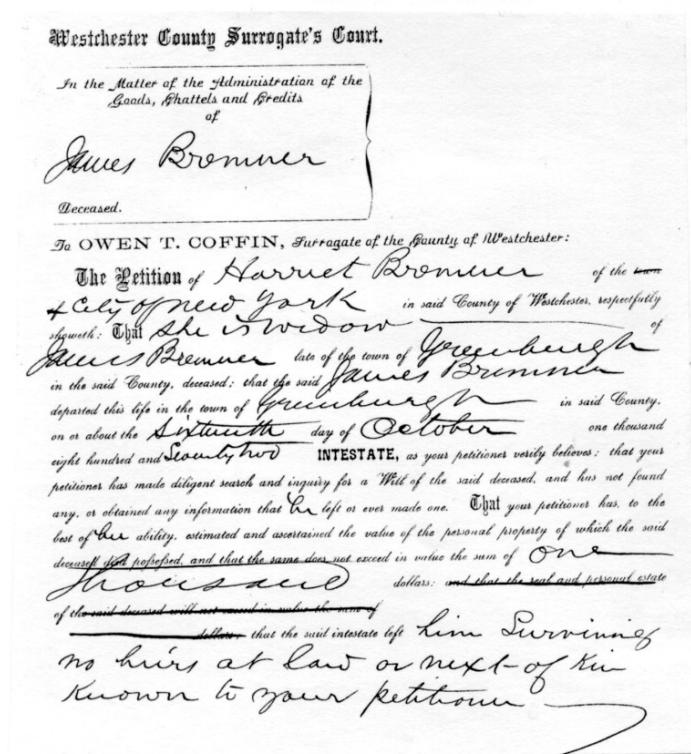
As always, Ed had us totally involved with the story of the Aqueduct's own special river and its surroundings. He is not only a masterful photographer and rugged explorer, but has the humor and quick thinking of a born speaker and entertainer. Thank you so much, Ed, for leading us up the river. And a special thanks to Gwen Thomas for arranging the program. - Mavis Cain

More Pieces of the James Bremner Puzzle

The plea in our last issue for help on the trail of James Bremner, Overseer of the Aqueduct's Fourth division from 1845 to 1872 and inhabitant of the Dobbs Ferry Overseer's House, brought two wonderful contributions. John Turrell of Peekskill, a volunteer at the Westchester Archives, went through the probate files and found a Petition for Letters of Administration of Bremner's estate (see below). Now we know that Bremner remarried after his first wife's death in 1847. His second wife was Harriet. The document implies that she moved back to New York City after Bremner's death and that, sadly, there were no other heirs. Judging from her signature on one of the documents, she was either frail or elderly.

The second contributor to our search is Alan K. Hogenauer, an enthusiastic lover of the trail from Oakdale, NY. He succeeded in finding James Bremner and his family in the US Census records by searching for the place of birth, Scotland. He learned that Harriet had two daughters, Harriet and Sarah Laird. By 1879, daughter Harriet was gone and Sarah, Alan hypothesizes, may have married a William Lodge who was also part of the household. Three other household members were also listed.

So, thanks to John and Alan, we have a clearer picture of the family living at the Overseer's House in the 1800s. Congratulations to all the sleuthers. - Mavis Cain



Graphics Help Needed

The Friends are seeking a volunteer with professional graphic design experience. If you have the skills and can spare some time, please call Charlotte Fahn at 914-478-3961 or Mavis Cain at 914-693-0529. Thanks!

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.

Aqueduct News / In Brief

Several dozen **employees of Consumer Reports** in Yonkers routinely run, walk, or cycle on area trails before or after work or during lunch breaks, we learned from CR's Lee Druckenmiller. Workers at the CR building at Executive Boulevard use the Aqueduct, South County Trailway, and local community trails to create their own wide-ranging series of loop routes. The poster version of the Friends' color map/guide of the Aqueduct hangs in the CR fitness center for ready reference. Let us know if you would like one for your company or school. . . . **The Hammond Museum in North Salem and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection** have co-produced an exhibit that "combines art and science to illustrate the rich beauty of New York City's watershed areas." Thirty-six artists using various media "focus on water purity, animal protection, land conservation, and wetlands." The exhibit tells the history of the Croton watershed system via a "talking map," and includes family workshops about watersheds, water supply, and topographic maps. It runs until July 22nd. Tel.: 914-669-5033 The county's **Croton Point Nature Center** sponsored a **three-part Aqueduct program** in April-May, featuring a slide show and two guided walks of the trail's north end led by Croton Historical Society president Carl Oechsner. . . . **The Aqueduct** figured prominently in a series of photomontages created by 21 fifth-graders last winter in Irvington's Dows Lane School. The 12-week project in which the students learned about the village's historic landmarks and principles of photography and composition culminated in a local gallery exhibit.

Newsletter Editor:

Charlotte Fahn, 914-478-3961

Associate Editor:

Mavis Cain, 914-693-0529

Please send in your news items, reminiscences, and historical tidbits.



QUAKER HILL, NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE EAST
BRANCH OF THE CROTON RIVER.

(From Scribner's Monthly, Vol. 14, June 1877,
courtesy of Laura Rice.)

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

is a private, non-profit, volunteer organization formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton Aqueduct (Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic 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 State Historic 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.

**Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Inc.
Overseer's House
15 Walnut Street
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109**

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dobbs Ferry
NY 10522
Permit No. 3038



