



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter
No. 23, Spring 2006

Book Treasures Donated to Friends

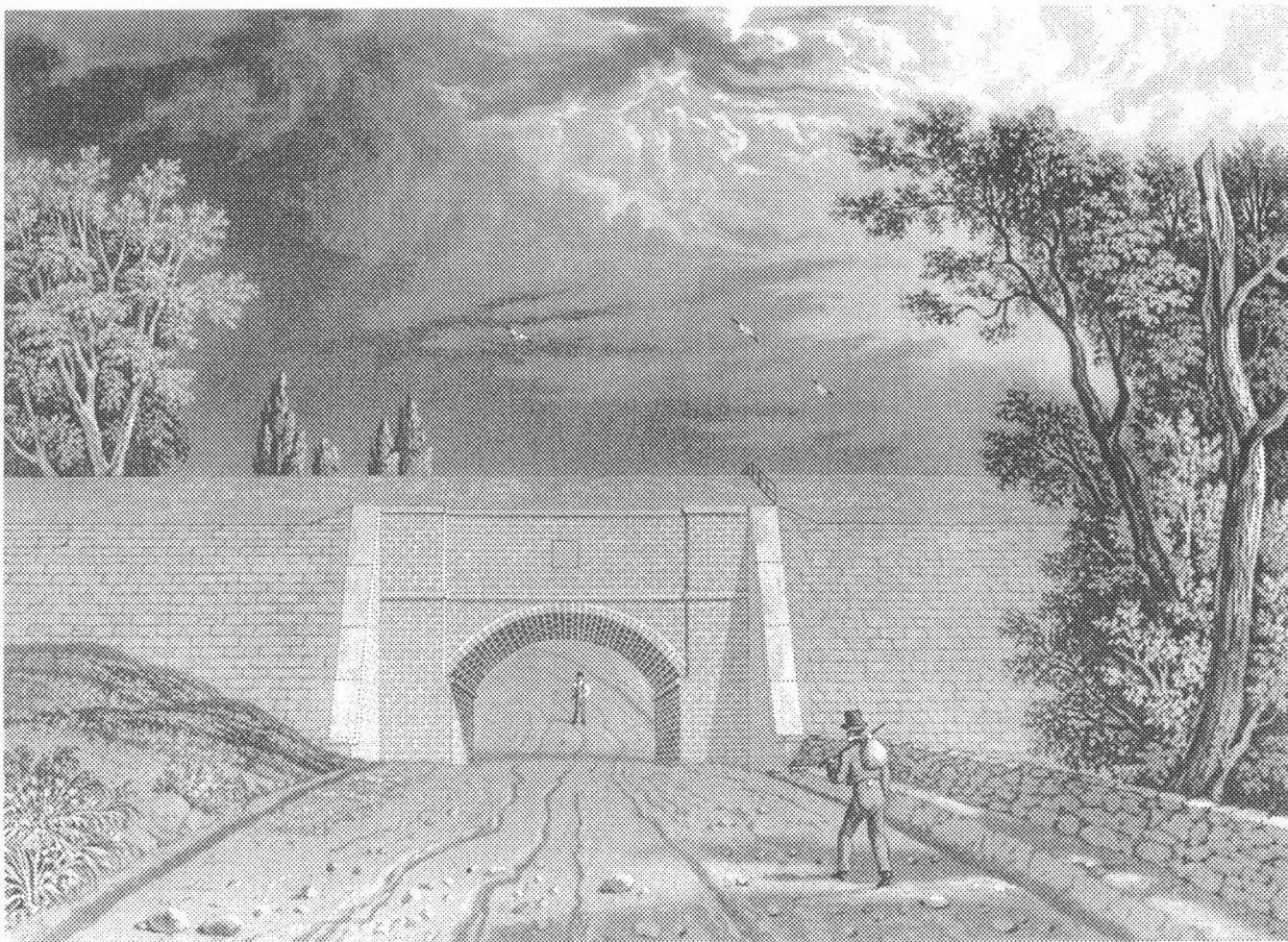
Sometimes wishes come true. If anyone had asked the Friends to name a single "starter" volume for our archive-to-be for the Keeper's House Visitor Center, the reply would probably have been Fayette B. Tower's 1843 *Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct*. We've been very fortunate, for in December 2005, Harriet Holdsworth of Hastings gave an original copy of Tower's book to the Friends in memory of her husband, Ted Holdsworth. A second prized volume in the gift was the *City of New York Aqueduct Commission Reports on the New Croton Aqueduct 1883-1887*. The Friends are deeply appreciative of this auspicious donation.

In her letter accompanying the books, Harriet writes in part: "Since 1956 when we moved into Stone Cottage on the Zinsser estate, Ted enjoyed walking on the Aqueduct on his way to and from the station, walking the dog and just walking way up or way down just for the pleasure. . . . We met many groups who came regularly out from the city to walk on the Aqueduct. There was a group of Europeans used to walking along the Rhine and they were particularly appreciative. They would also ask why there weren't other paths along our great Hudson River. These books were a gift to my husband. He would be very happy if many other people could enjoy them as we have."

Fayette Bartholomew Tower (1817-57) was an assistant engineer who worked on the Croton Aqueduct for the five years of its construction, starting in 1837 when John Jervis hired him at age 20. Gerard Koeppl, author of *Water for Gotham*, describes him as "a young man with large hopes, a restless nature, and an artist's sensitivities." Born in Waterville, New York, he was frustrated in his desire for an engineering education, but was able to take courses in topographical drawing and gained experience in rugged country, including central Westchester, as a surveyor for several railroads.



Harriet Holdsworth (left) presenting *Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct* to Mavis Cain, Friends president. (Photo by C. Fahn)



"Aqueduct Bridge for Road Way," showing the Archville crossing. Plate XIV from Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct.

In letters he describes the "wild and romantic" Croton Valley, according to Koeppel, who writes that "Tower was astonished at the engineering difficulties" of the Aqueduct construction.

Tower's book, now very rare, is the source of the classic illustrations of the Aqueduct. These include the cross-section on the mailing panel of this newsletter, showing how the Aqueduct was constructed across valleys, and the engravings on the Friends' two color maps of the Aqueduct. He drew his original sketches, in ink or pencil and wash on paper, "for my own satisfaction." The illustrations in the book are actually engravings by prominent New York artists based on Tower's drawings. Tower dedicated his book "To the Inhabitants of the City of New York Whose Enterprise is Strikingly Exemplified by the Construction of the Croton Aqueduct."

The reports of the Aqueduct Commission on the New Croton Aqueduct for 1883-87, the first of three eventually published, is a large-format, beautifully produced volume on the "plans and work of construction . . . and the proposed dams and reservoirs and other appurtenances" of the second Croton Aqueduct,

which is still in service. In addition to text and technical material, of particular interest today are its illustrations. These include vivid photographs (photogravures) of the construction work, and page after page of drawings of the New Croton's tunnel, gatehouses, weirs, and shafts that are masterworks of drafting, so realistic in detail that you want to reach out and touch the stone.

The Friends will seek contributions for the conservation and rebinding of the Tower volume, permitting eventual display of the Holdsworths' gift at the Keeper's House. And what was life like for the Holdsworths in a house virtually on the Aqueduct? In their early years in Stone Cottage, guests would wonder about the roars and rumbles that came through gaps in the old floorboards, actually from the unseen basement furnace. If it was after the guests had had a glass of wine or two, Ted or Harriet would mention that, well, the

(continued on page 4)

Page 3: Title page of Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct, depicting the Croton fountain probably in City Hall Park.

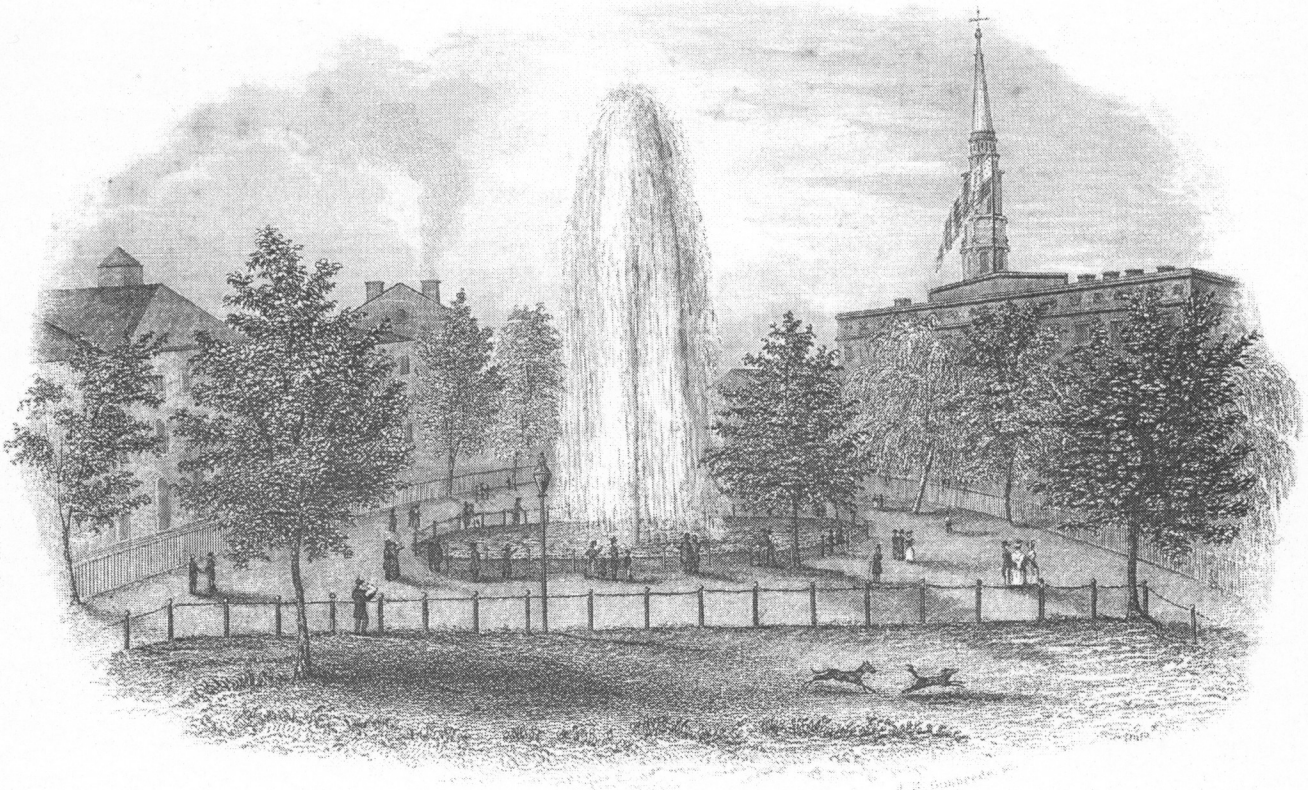
ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE
CROTON AQUEDUCT,

BY

J. B. Fowler.

OF THE

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

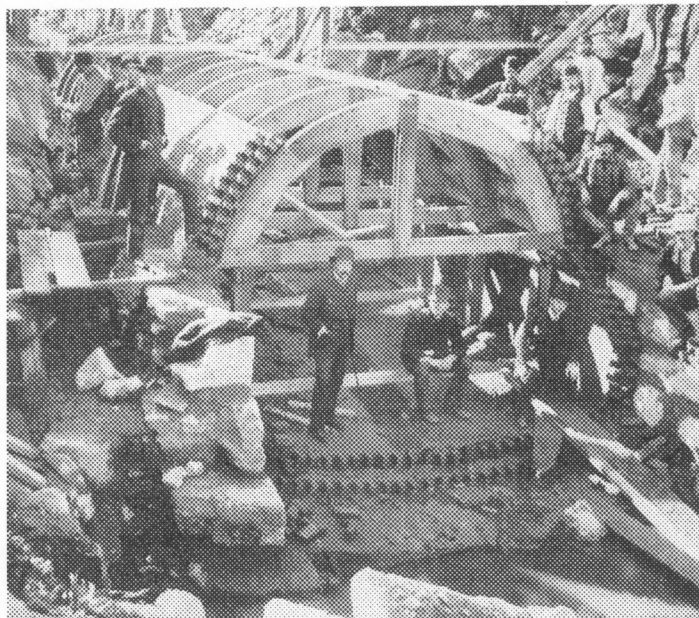


New-York and London:
Wiley and Putnam,

1845.

Aqueduct is flushed out periodically, and by the way, a man comes down in a canoe inspecting the tunnel, and even stops by to say hello now and then . . .

The closing words (including italics) belong to Fayette Tower: "The advantages, the comforts and blessings of this supply of pure water will be appreciated as the city extends the means for its use, and the time is not distant when she will regard it as a treasure which was cheaply purchased, and will proudly point to the noble work which she has achieved not only as an example of her munificence, but as an illustration of what *art* and *science* can accomplish. . . . The foreigner who visits this country will find the Croton Aqueduct an interesting specimen of our *public works*, and will be pleased with a pedestrian tour along the line of work [where] he may enjoy much that is beautiful in American scenery. . ."



"Turning the Arch" from Aqueduct Commission Reports on the New Croton Aqueduct 1883-1887.

Invasive Plants on the Trail

To the Editor:

With spring upon us, I hope the Aqueduct mowers can mow the full width of the Aqueduct before the poison hemlock blooms. They are the pretty white blossoms often mistaken for Queen Anne's Lace. Poison hemlock is best known for its toxic roots (think Socrates) and is wildly invasive. I have spent hours digging it out of my property.

Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) is another invader. It is the vine with the beautiful clusters of blue to turquoise to purple berries that I was naïve enough to admire until I tried to pull it off my dogwoods. It has such clinging ten-drills it can break branches when you try to strip it off. Also the roots are like tenacious octupi. It is now advancing along the Aqueduct and the Saw Mill Parkway.



Poison Hemlock
(*Conium maculatum*)

Harriet Holdsworth
Hastings-on-Hudson

SAVE THE DATE:

Friends Annual Meeting, Sunday, April 23rd

Please join us at the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct Annual Meeting on Sunday, April 23rd, at 4:30. The meeting is at the Hudson Valley Writers' Center in Sleepy Hollow. Croton system historian Robert Kornfeld, Jr., will give an illustrated talk on "Valley of Dams: Origins of the New Croton Dam," in observance of the dam's centennial, recounting the evolution of its design starting with the Croton Aqueduct visionaries of the 1830s, to advances in high masonry dams, to the plans that culminated in the masterpiece we see today.

The Hudson Valley Writers' Center is in the restored Philipse Manor Station, just north of Kingsland Point Park, at 300 Riverside Drive in Sleepy Hollow, 2.6 miles north of the Tappan Zee Bridge. Driving directions will be on the invitations being mailed out and are on the Center's web site, www.writerscenter.org. By train, the Center is one stop north of Tarrytown on MetroNorth's Hudson Line (call 800-Metro-Info or 212-532-4900; www.mta.info). The 3:20 pm train from Grand Central Terminal arrives at Philipse Manor Station at 4:12 pm.

We look forward to seeing you. Advance registration is not required. Light refreshments will be served.

High Bridge Update

The Friends are a member of the Steering Committee of the High Bridge Coalition, which is leading a campaign for the restoration and reopening of the High Bridge, the most celebrated element of the Old Croton Aqueduct. The Coalition believes this pedestrian bridge, a national landmark, can have a new life as a great public space and critical link in the Old Croton Aqueduct Greenway. Recent progress includes:

—**Bridge inspection.** The New York City Department of Transportation is nearing completion of a \$1.9 million structural evaluation of the 158-year-old pedestrian bridge. The inspection report is expected to detail the work needed, the costs, and how restoration could be implemented in stages.

—**A start on funding.** Bronx Congressman Jose E. Serrano has secured \$5 million in federal funds as a start for the bridge's rehabilitation, expected to cost at least \$30 million.

—**Projects underway.** The Bronx end of the bridge is easily reached, but the Manhattan end has long been inaccessible. New York City Parks & Recreation will rebuild the staircase that once led from High Bridge Water Tower Terrace in Highbridge Park down to the bridge and build a new path to serve bikers and people with disabilities. The city's Department of Environmental Protection and the Parks Department are carrying out improvements to the bridge's two gatehouses.

—**Raising public awareness.** The High Bridge Coalition conducts visioning meetings in the neighborhoods closest to the bridge in the Bronx and

Manhattan, solicits the support of elected officials, and has recently published a striking new brochure, *The High Bridge & High-bridge Parks* (contact the editor if you would like one). The Coalition also seeks press coverage to reacquaint the public at large with this once hugely popular tourist destination and river crossing. An op-ed piece in the weekly City Section of the *New York Times* (Nov. 27, 2005), "A Walkway from Manhattan to the Bronx: Making a commitment to open the High Bridge" by David Rivel of the City Parks Foundation highlighted the span.

The following letter from the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct was published in the same section of the *Times* on Dec. 25:

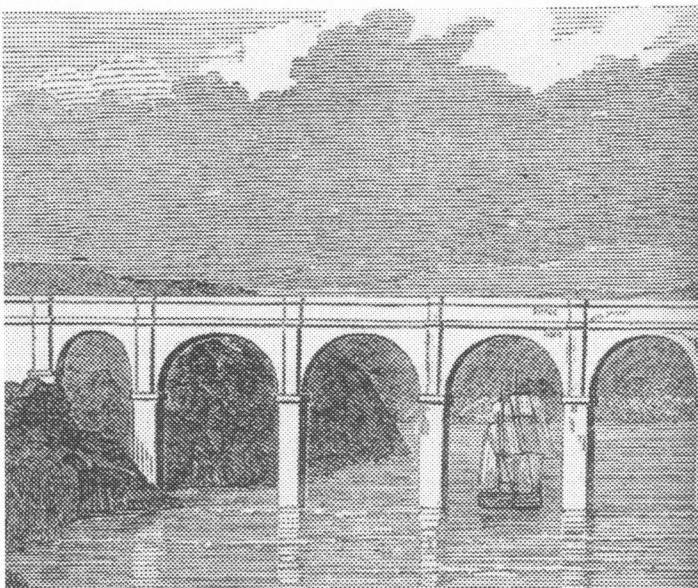
" . . . THE RESTORATION AND REOPENING OF THE HIGH BRIDGE ARE OF GREAT REGIONAL AS WELL AS CITYWIDE INTEREST. THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AS STEWARD OF NEW YORK'S 2,000-SQUARE MILE UPSTATE WATERSHED, AND THE FRIENDS OF THE OLD CROTON AQUEDUCT HAVE WORKED HARD FOR YEARS AS PART OF THE HIGH BRIDGE COALITION WITH JUST THIS REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN MIND.

THE NUMBER OF WALKERS AND BIKERS EAGER TO TRAVERSE THE ENTIRE ROUTE OF THE HISTORIC AQUEDUCT, WHICH INCLUDES WESTCHESTER COUNTY (WHERE IT COMPRISES OLD CROTON AQUEDUCT STATE HISTORIC PARK), THE BRONX, AND MANHATTAN, GROWS STEADILY. THE STATE AND CITY ARE MAKING THIS EXPERIENCE EASIER IN MANY LOCAL PLACES AND IN MANY WAYS; ENABLING THE PUBLIC TO CROSS THE HARLEM RIVER ON THE HIGH BRIDGE IS THE LINCHPIN OF THE EFFORT.

HOWEVER, THE HIGH BRIDGE IS MORE THAN SIMPLY A LINK. IT IS A MARVELOUS PLACE TO BE — THE RARE BRIDGE THAT HAS NEVER HAD CARS ON IT NOR EVER WILL — AND ITS RENEWAL AS A PUBLIC SPACE WILL BE CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION FOR THE ENTIRE REGION."



*Detail of the High Bridge railing.
(Photo by C. Fahn)*



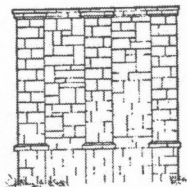
Manhattan side of the High Bridge (Illustrated London News), part of a reproduction in The Croton Dams and Aqueduct by Christopher R. Tompkins.

Visits Inside the Ossining Weir Chamber and Walks on the Aqueduct led by Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Weir Chamber Visits

Saturdays, April 8, May 6, July 8, 2006: See a video and exhibit about the history of the Aqueduct, and cross the Aqueduct bridge over Sing Sing Kill to see the inside of the Ossining weir chamber and descend into the water tunnel itself. Meet at 1:00 pm in the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center-Heritage Area Visitor Center, Ossining. Directions: turn west onto Broadway from Highland Ave. (Rte. 9) near intersection of Croton Ave. (Rte. 133). Parking available. Free; advance registration not required. Takes place rain or shine unless weather is extreme. Accessible from MetroNorth's Hudson Line Ossining station. Questions? Call 914-478-3961.

For Saturday, June 10th, Ossining Village Fair Day: Tours into the Aqueduct tunnel at intervals between about 10:30 am and 3:00 pm. Meet at stone weir chamber at the far end of the Aqueduct bridge, near the Joseph G. Community Center. Directions as above. Contact no.: 914-478-4117.



WALKS



Free; advance registration not required.

Sunday, April 16, 2006. Ossining to Ryders Brook, Briarcliff. About 4-5 miles round trip; level. See historic Double Arch Bridge, 1839 ventilator, embankments, and large stone culvert at Ryder Brook. Meet at noon at Joseph G.

Caputo Community Center, Ossining; turn west onto Broadway from Highland Ave. (Rte. 9) in Ossining near intersection of Croton Ave. (Rte. 133). Parking available. Accessible from MetroNorth's Hudson Line Ossining station. Leader: Tom Tarnowsky, 718-549-4704 or tompegt@verizon.net.

Sunday, April 30. North end of the trail at New Croton Dam to area of Croton Gorge. About 5 miles round trip; mainly level. See beautiful Croton Gorge, stone culverts, ventilators, and Aqueduct embankments built into the ridgeline. Meet at noon in parking lot of Croton Gorge County Park off Rt. 129, about 1/2 mile north of Croton-on-Hudson. Access also from Underhill

Ave. exit (westbound) off Taconic State Pkwy. Leaders: Cornelia Cotton and Carl Grimm, 914-271-3607.

Sunday, May 21. Aqueduct Keepers House, Dobbs Ferry, to Main St., Irvington. About 5 miles round trip; level. Walk on high stone embankment over Jewells Brook, see 19th century mansions, Hudson River villages, and river views. Meet at noon at Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park HQ near south end of Dobbs Ferry, just west of Rte. 9. Park on local streets. Accessible from MetroNorth's Hudson Line Dobbs Ferry station. Leader: Doug Emilio, 914-674-4958 or douglas.emilio@verizon.net.

Sunday, June 4. Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx, to Tibbets Brook Park, Yonkers. About 8 miles round trip; level except for one flight of steps. Mainly wooded parkland. View Dutch Colonial Van Cortlandt Mansion, exterior of weir and other Aqueduct structures. Meet at noon on park side of Broadway at the 242nd St. stop of #1 subway line. At 12:30, will pick up additional hikers who drive to Van Cortlandt Golf House, accessible from northbound entrance of Major Deegan Expressway (I-87) at Van Cortlandt Park South. Free parking. Leader: Tom Tarnowsky, 718-549-4704 or tompegt@verizon.net.

Sunday, June 25. Sleepy Hollow to Rockefeller State Park Preserve (RSPP). About 4 miles round trip. Level except for one short slope on a paved path. See ventilator, exterior of weir chamber, high stone Aqueduct embankment, and bridge over Pocantico River during short RSPP side trip. Meet at noon in Sleepy Hollow H.S. parking lot adjacent to Bedford Road (Rte. 448), east/uphill of Rte. 9 (Broadway) a mile north of Tarrytown. About 1.5 mile walk from MetroNorth's Hudson Line Tarrytown station. Leader: Jean Horkans, 914-762-4082.

Sunday, July 9. Five Corners in Hastings-on-Hudson to Untermyer Park, Yonkers. About 5 miles round trip; level. Hudson River views, historic sites, ventilators, Aqueduct stonework. Meet at noon at green "OCA" Aqueduct signpost on Old Broadway (Rte. 9) next to Grace Church, Hastings. Parking on local streets. Accessible from MetroNorth's Hudson Line Hastings station. Leader: Hal Kaplan, 914-376-3156.

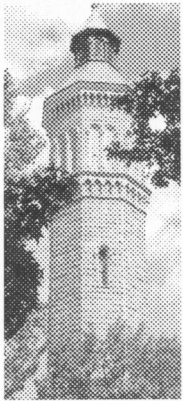


Calendar Notes

April 8-July 9: See p. 6 for listing of weir chamber tours and trail walks led by Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

Sat. April 8, 11 am to about 3:30. Ossining weir chamber visit and trail walk. 4-5 miles round trip. A brief talk about the landmark 1842 brick water tunnel and a visit to the tunnel interior, followed by an easy walk from Ossining to Crotonville and back. Sponsored by Westchester Trails Association. Meet at 11 am inside Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, 95 Broadway, Ossining, near intersection of Rte. 9 (Highland Ave.) and Rte. 133 (Croton Ave.). Steady rain cancels the walk but not the talk and tunnel visit. Leader: Charlotte Fahn, 914-478-3961.

Thurs. April 27. A talk by local historian Carl Oechsner on the Croton Dam and water for New York City, entitled "New City, Old Troubles," covering about 1842 to 1900. Sponsored by Yorktown Historical Society. 7:30 pm at the Yorktown Museum, 1974 Commerce St., Yorktown Hts., 914-962-2970.



Tours of High Bridge Water Tower

The 200-ft.-high landmark water tower is located in Highbridge Park, Manhattan, at 173rd St. and Amsterdam Ave. Tours are conducted by the New York City Urban Park Rangers. For information call the Urban Park Rangers at 212-304-2365 or call Joseph Sanchez at 212-927-5864. Information also available at the North Manhattan Parks web

site, www.northmanhattanparks.org; click on Events Calendar. The current schedule of tours is:

Sun., April 9, 1-3pm

Sat., May 6, 11am-1pm

Sat., June 3 (Nat'l Trails Day), 10am-2pm

For inquiries about Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park or to report trail conditions, call Park Manager Peter Iskenderian at 914-693-5259; mailing address: 15 Walnut Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

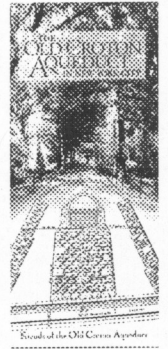
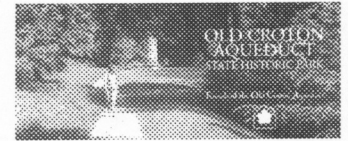
Publication Note

New York Underground: The Anatomy of a City, by Julia Solis. 2005, Routledge, New York, 251 pp.

See Chapter 3, "Struggling for Fresh Water," p. 18-27, for a brief historical account, and Chapter 4, "In the Wake of the Croton Maid," pp. 28-39, and color plates at p. 88 for rarely seen views within the Aqueduct and High Bridge. The book is dedicated to the Croton Maid, the small boat in which a crew traversed the Croton Aqueduct as far as the Harlem River on the June day in 1842 when water first flowed into the pristine tunnel.

Map Orders

The Friends' full-color map/guides, *Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park* (Westchester County) and *The Old Croton Aqueduct in New York City*, are \$5. each (members, \$4.). Add 75 cents shipping and handling for the first map, 50 cents for each additional map. Send a check for the total to the Friends at 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522. For the name of a retailer, go to www.aqueduct.org or call 914-693-4117.



Mud Alert

Be kind to the trail! With the arrival of spring mud, bikers and others using wheels should allow the trail to dry out first, to avoid creating ruts.

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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

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

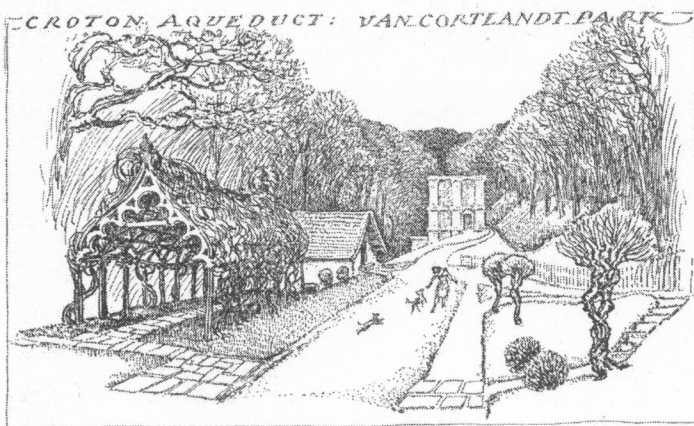
Please make check payable to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Send it with this coupon to the Friends at Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Tel _____

Please let us know if you would like to volunteer.



"Croton Aqueduct: Van Cortlandt Park," with weir in distance, drawn by R. L. Dickinson. From the New York Walk Book, NY-NJ Trail Conference, 1923 and 2005.

Newsletter: Charlotte Fahn, *Editor*. News items, reminiscences, and comments welcome: 914-478-3961 or czfahn@yahoo.com or by mail c/o the Friends.

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Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct is a private, non-profit, volunteer organization formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton Aqueduct. 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. Address: Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St. Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109; telephone 914-693-4117, www.aqueduct.org

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