

# Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

*Newsletter*

No. 29, Spring 2008

## New Tarrytown Parkland Invites Trail Users into Gracemere

With the designation of new Tarrytown parkland in Gracemere, on the east side of Route 9 opposite Lyndhurst, a longtime missing link has now become a green, serene segment of the Aqueduct experience. There is a clear entrance into Gracemere, a new path that connects with a beautiful but little-known section of the trail, a green buffer between new homes and the trail, and public access to a gazebo and picturesque pond that are part of the new park. In the planning stage by State Parks, working with the village, is a path on a previously undelineated part of the Aqueduct. Thanks to the concerted efforts of Aqueduct advocates, village officials, and State Parks, the perennial question —“where do I go after Lyndhurst?”—should fade away.

Gracemere is the last of Tarrytown's nineteenth century estates; its 34 acres were originally owned by the Graef family, who farmed the land. Over the years a number of private homes were built on the property. The remainder of the land was acquired by the Unification Church (Holy Spirit Association) in the 1970s. In 2002 the church applied to Tarrytown to build 15 houses on the grounds. As originally planned, some would have directly abutted the Aqueduct, which crosses the western part of the estate. There was concern

that others, sited upslope, would cause drainage problems on the trail.

As a result of these and other issues, open space advocates Esther Samra and Linda Viertel, who are also Gracemere residents, undertook an effort to preserve as much of the land as possible, especially the portions fronting on Route 9 (Broadway) and along the Aqueduct. The outcome of more than five years of arduous planning process has been the relocation of some of the home sites



*The entrance to Gracemere from Route 9 (Broadway), at the traffic light.*



*Pond in the new parkland in Gracemere. (Photos by C. Fahn)*

and the acquisition and designation of new village parkland, named Gracemere Park, along and around Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park. (See the site map on the developer's website, [www.emeraldwoodsny.com](http://www.emeraldwoodsny.com). The new parkland is labeled "conserved green space.") A number of steep slope and wetland sites elsewhere in the estate have been preserved as dedicated open space.

**Directions.** Northbound walkers exiting the Aqueduct trail from Lyndhurst at Route 9 should walk a short distance north to the traffic light at the Kraft Foods Technical Center. *Trail users are urged to cross at the light* on this heavily trafficked road. Cross to the low stone walls and two stone pillars marking the entrance to Gracemere. A new walking path starts here, roughly paralleling the roadway that enters the estate and passing through a small parking area to connect with the wide, long-existing but underused segment easily recognizable as the Aqueduct. The pond and gazebo are downhill from the trail. Or turn right at a double line of maple trees and stroll down this lane to reach the section of new Aqueduct trail State Parks plans to demarcate.

The established part of the trail ends at Sheldon Ave., where a solid wall of sound barriers marking the Thruway looms a short distance ahead, blocking further passage; this is where Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct believe a pedestrian overpass should be built

as part of the Tappan Zee Bridge project. Turn left – west – at Sheldon to return to Route 9 and continue north as in the past, turning right onto the north side of White Plains Rd. (Route 119) to regain the trail immediately past a local shopping center. There is a ventilator, number 14 on the Friends' color map of the Aqueduct, at this point on the trail.

Another option when reaching Sheldon Ave., through greener, quieter streets, is to turn right and walk to East Meadow Ave. Here turn left to walk *under* the Thruway. Cross at the light on Route 119 and turn left again. Watch for the trail and ventilator 14 on your right. Southbound walkers should reverse all of the

above directions.

**Future steps essential.** Two important measures are yet to come. The light at the Kraft Foods facility on Route 9, a state roadway, is a blinking light. The state Department of Transportation has committed to changing it to a regular stop light, with red and green signals, to make this a safe crossing. Equally necessary are directional signs at several key places on the Aqueduct, including where the Lyndhurst section of the trail meets Route 9, something the Friends and the public have long pressed for.

**Many involved.** In addition to the pivotal role of Gracemere residents as noted above, the revised residential site plan and creation of Gracemere Park can be credited to a number of people. These include the Tarrytown Planning Board, chaired by Stanley Friedlander; Mayor Drew Fixell; former mayor Paul Janos; and Michael Inglis, representing the developer. Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct provided input and support as well. Alix Schnee, State Parks Supervising Manager of the Aqueduct; Peter Iskenderian, former Aqueduct trail manager; Village Engineer Michael McGarvey; and Tarrytown landscape architect Steve Yarabek have collaborated on various elements of the now-contiguous new park and Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, to the great benefit of Aqueduct users.

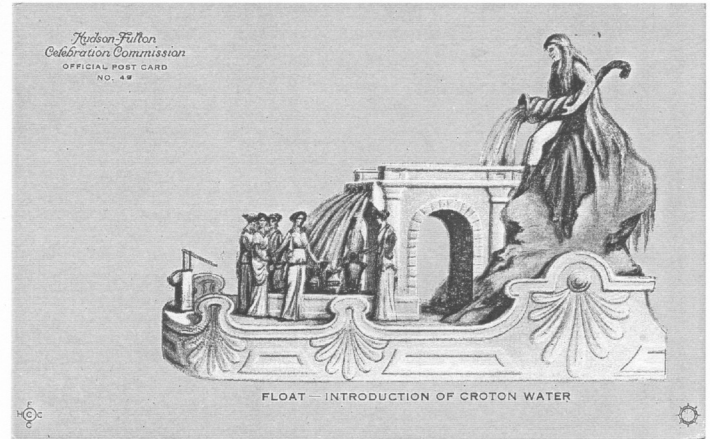


## Hudson-Fulton Celebration: 1909

The Old Croton Aqueduct was still a subject of civic pride in 1909, when New York staged a fortnight of festivities to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage up the Hudson. The postcard reproduced here was "Hudson-Fulton Celebration Commission Official Post Card No. 49." The legend on back of the postcard reads:

THE INTRODUCTION OF CROTON WATER INTO THE CITY OF NEW YORK IN 1842 WAS MARKED BY A MONSTER CELEBRATION. THE ARRIVAL OF THE WATER WAS INDICATED BY THE GUSHING OF A FOUNTAIN SIXTY FEET HIGH IN THE FORMER PORTION OF THE CITY HALL PARK NOW OCCUPIED BY THE POSTOFFICE.

Historian Lincoln Diamant, in his book "Hoopla on the Hudson: An Intimate View of New York's Great 1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration" (Purple Mountain Press), writes in his Prologue: "...after almost a decade of joint Dutch/U.S. preparation, New York City was ready to host a massive international convocation up and down the banks of the Hudson River." The Croton Water float was one of 50 floats in a nighttime parade on Oct. 2. Diamant's father, then a correspondent for a Dutch



newspaper, described the parade as "a glittering, rippling stream of variegated lights flowing over dark pavements covered with people who continued to cheer."

Time flies—preparations are underway for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, now expanded in the events it commemorates and named the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial.

## Connecting with the Trail in Tibbetts Brook Park

The conventional route between the Aqueduct trail at Prescott St. (ventilator 22 on the Friends' color map) and the trail in Tibbetts Brook Park entails a long walk on Yonkers Ave., which seems more traffic-glutted than ever. Friends members Dale Ramsey and Sarah Schindler recommend a route that shortens this unpleasant stretch and may be new to many trail walkers. It takes advantage of a flight of stairs giving access from Yonkers Ave. to South County Trailway



The Aqueduct trail in Tibbetts Brook Park as it passes under the Teresa Ave. entrance to the park from Midland Ave. (Photo by C. Fahn)

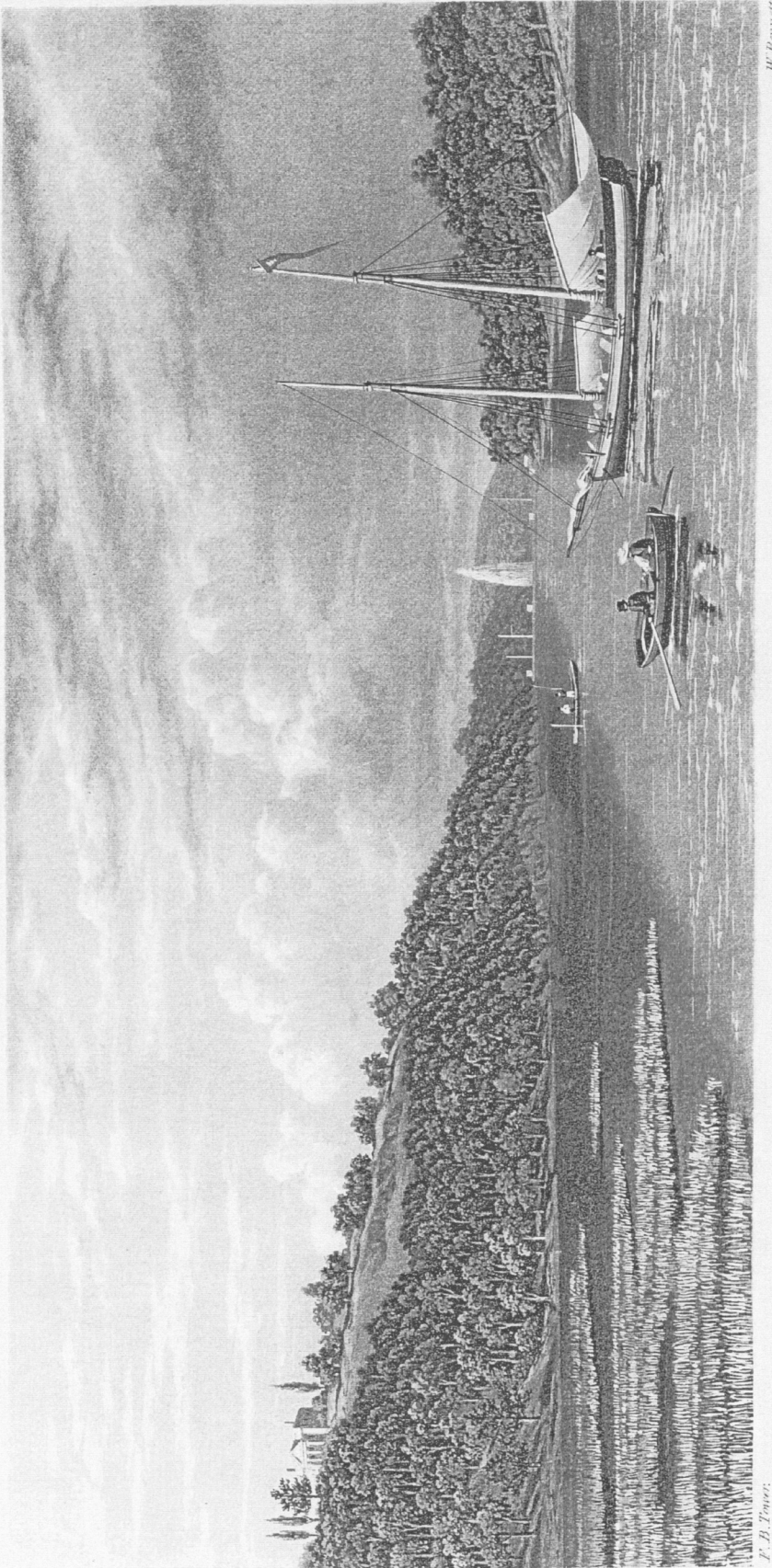
overhead. This "rails-to-trail" greenway, now nearing completion by Westchester County, follows the right-of-way of the "Old Put" railroad. It crosses Yonkers Ave. on an old, now trackless, railroad bridge.

To use this route, a southbound walker would exit the trail at Prescott St. and walk along Yonkers Ave. for about four-tenths of a mile, watching for the railroad bridge overpass and stairway just below it on the south side of the street. Ascend the stairs and turn right. You will be on South County Trailway at the north end of Tibbetts Brook Park.

Stay on South County Trailway past the back wall of an adjacent motel, over Cross County Parkway on a second overpass, and after a short walk, to an intersection with a park path where you turn left. Make your way on park paths north around a large green field and up a hillside on the opposite side of the park to the Aqueduct trail. Northbound walkers would do the reverse, most easily by taking the narrow paved path downhill from the New York City Waterworks structure marked on the Friends' map.

Besides accessing the quiet, green park sooner, this route eliminates having to negotiate the sprawling intersection at Midland and Yonkers avenues past the ramps of the Cross County Parkway, and reveals the appealing lawns and fields of Tibbetts Brook Park. It will be shown on the second edition of the Friends' map, now in preparation.

XX



VIEW OF THE JET AT HARLEM RIVER.

Plate XX from "Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct" by Fayette B. Tower, 1843. The fountain resulted from the release of water under pressure in the low-level pipe across the Harlem River, from 1842 until the High Bridge was completed in 1848. On the

hillside at the far left is "Morris House," today's Morris-Jumel Mansion. Built in 1765, the mansion has a colorful history and is well worth a visit. The Croton Aqueduct passes through the hilly terrain downslope from the house.



## The High Bridge's Harlem River Fountain

This year marks the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1848 completion of the High Bridge. With last year's Earth Day announcement by Mayor Bloomberg that the city will fund the bridge's restoration and reopening as part of its PlaNYC 2030, there is now true cause for celebration.

An interesting sidelight of High Bridge history is the jet of water that on occasion shot up from the Harlem River during the years of the bridge's construction. The Croton Aqueduct opened in 1842; it was another six years until the bridge was completed. In the intervening years, Croton water was carried to Manhattan Island through a 36-inch low-level pipe laid across the river. The water descended on the mainland side and then ascended on the Manhattan side through a 120-foot-deep inverted siphon. The pressurized water, entirely gravity-fed, could be released as a jet, or fountain, upstream from the pipe crossing. According to Aqueduct historian Robert Kornfeld, Jr., the engineers would "play" the waters of the jet to varying effects, to the delight of High Bridge tourists.

Fayette Tower, a young Aqueduct engineer, memorialized the feature with one of his classic illustrations (opposite). Here is part of his description:

"... AN EMBANKMENT HAS BEEN FORMED ACROSS THE RIVER AND THE PIPE LEAVING THE AQUEDUCT ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE VALLEY FOLLOWS DOWN THE SLOPE OF THE HILL, AND CROSSING OVER THE RIVER UPON THIS EMBANKMENT, ASCENDS ON THE SOUTH SIDE AGAIN TO THE AQUEDUCT. AT THE BOTTOM OR LOWEST POINT IN THIS PIPE, A BRANCH PIPE OF 1 FOOT DIAMETER HAS BEEN CONNECTED, EXTENDING A DISTANCE OF 80 FEET FROM IT... THE END OF THIS PIPE IS TURNED UPWARDS TO FORM A JET, AND IRON PLATES ARE FASTENED UPON IT GIVING ANY FORM THAT MAY BE DESIRED TO THE WATER ISSUING. THE LEVEL OF THIS BRANCH PIPE IS ABOUT 120 FEET BELOW THE BOTTOM OF THE AQUEDUCT... AFFORDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A BEAUTIFUL *jet d'eau*; - SUCH AN (SIC) ONE AS CANNOT BE OBTAINED AT THE FOUNTAINS IN THE CITY. FROM AN ORIFICE OF SEVEN INCHES DIAMETER THE COLUMN OF WATER RISES TO A HEIGHT OF 115 FEET WHEN THERE IS ONLY A DEPTH OF 2 FEET OF WATER IN THE AQUEDUCT. ...

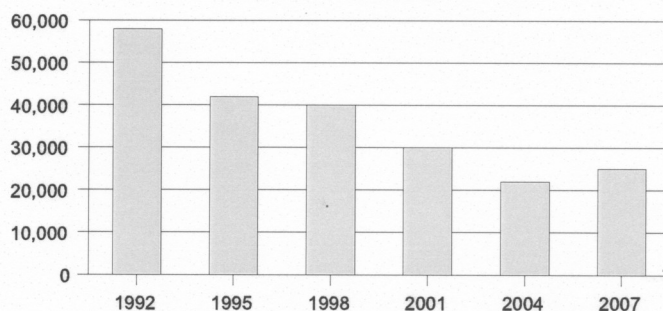
"THE SCENERY AROUND THIS FOUNTAIN ADDED MUCH TO ITS BEAUTY; THERE IT STOOD, - A WHITENED COLUMN RISING FROM THE RIVER, ERECT, OR SHIFTING ITS FORM, OR WAVING LIKE A FOREST TREE AS THE WINDS SWAYED IT, WITH THE RAINBOW TINTS RESTING UPON ITS SPRAY, WHILE ON EITHER SIDE THE WOODED HILLS AROSE TO RIVAL ITS HEIGHT ..."

Ever practical, John Jervis, Chief Engineer of the Aqueduct, in 1848 had the low pipe dismantled and moved onto the High Bridge, where it served permanently as one of the two original 36-inch pipes carrying Croton water across the river.

## Funding for the Aqueduct: How You Can Help

Included in the proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$100 million for capital work - brick-and-mortar projects - in state parks and historic sites around the state. If passed by the legislature, this would be a strong first installment on long-neglected infrastructure needs. Parks & Trails New York, an Albany-based advocacy group, estimates the total need at \$650 million.

**All Funds Constant Dollar Capital Spending**  
(Figures in \$000's)



*Adjusted for inflation, State Parks' capital budget today buys 50% less than it did in 1992. (From GreenSpace, Parks & Trails New York, Winter 2007-08 issue.)*

While specific projects can't be designated before a budget is passed, if this item is funded it is likely that Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park will benefit. The pressing need to address crumbling stonework on weirs, ventilators, and embankment walls is just one example of the kind of work that would be eligible.

*Legislators must hear public support for full funding of the \$100 million item. Even a brief note in your own words will carry weight.* Letters and phone calls receive more attention than e-mail, but e-mail is better than sending no message at all. You should receive this before April 1<sup>st</sup>, the budget deadline, but often (usually) it passes later than that, so there is still time. In addition to contacting your own representatives in the Senate and Assembly, letters (or copies of letters) to the following legislators will help.

SENATOR JOSEPH BRUNO  
MAJORITY LEADER, NEW YORK STATE SENATE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 909  
ALBANY, NY 12247  
(518) 455-3191; BRUNO@SENATE.STATE.NY.US

SENATOR OWEN JOHNSON  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 913  
ALBANY, NY 12247  
(518) 455-3411; OJOHNSON@SENATE.STATE.NY.US

*(continued on page 7)*

**An Invitation to  
Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct Annual Meeting  
Sunday, March 30, 2008, 2 pm**



**"The Other Lives of David Douglass and John Jervis"**

We know Major Douglass and John Jervis for their critical roles in the creation of the Croton Aqueduct. But the two men had other passions and other accomplishments – to be recounted by Dr. Sidney Horenstein, popular lecturer, geologist, and educator emeritus at the American Museum of Natural History.

Irvington Public Library, Main & Astor  
across from the Metro-North Hudson Line Station  
Free and open to the public. No registration required.

### **Keeper's House Project Presented to Village Board**

The project to transform the Aqueduct Keeper's House at Walnut St. in Dobbs Ferry into a visitor center took another step forward with the project team's November 27, 2007, presentation to the Dobbs Ferry Board of Trustees. The undertaking was described by representatives of the project sponsors, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and the project's design firm, Stephen Tilly, Architect.

Friends' board members Robert Kornfeld, Jr., and Douglas Emilio, both specialists in preservation architecture, remarked that while the neglected, boarded-up house is sometimes regarded as an unsightly neighbor by local residents, its importance historically is undisputed. As the home and workplace of the superintendent of one division of the Aqueduct when it carried the water supply, it is the only remaining repository of the human element of the Aqueduct. Friends president Mavis Cain spoke about the Friends' campaign to raise 20% of the project budget as required by the federal award we so happily received, and also to

raise additional funds for rising construction costs and the cost of exhibits and programming. She explained that the federal award brings with it time-consuming layers of reviews and approvals which are now taking place.

Dr. Alix Schnee, State Parks Supervising Manager of the Aqueduct and a specialist in museum education, discussed the interpretive approaches being considered in attempting to meet the needs of today's students, ranging from the life and times of the successive keepers who worked from the 1850s house for 100 years, to connecting the water supply issues of the past to those of today. She also introduced the trail's new manager, Steven Oakes, to the trustees.

The trustees' questions covered a wide range as well, from coordination of technical aspects of the building's renovation with appropriate village officials; to sewer connections; to where a school bus might wait while a class is in the visitor center (answer: off-site); to the restoration of shutters on the windows; to the need to make plans for the house accessible for public comment. There was general agreement that the Keeper's House Visitor Center will be a wonderful resource for the village as well as for those who use the trail.





## Calendar Items

**Sun., March 30, 2 pm.** Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct Annual Meeting. See p. 6.

**Sat., April 26, 1 pm.** Ossining weir chamber and Aqueduct tunnel visit, led by Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. No registration required. Meet at Ossining Community Center, 95 Broadway (turn W from Rte. 9, opposite Croton Ave./Rte. 133). Information: 914-478-3961.

**Sun., April 27, 2 pm.** New Croton Dam walk, led by Carl Oechsner. Sponsor: Croton Friends of History and Croton Free Library. Meet at the library. Information: 914-271-6612.

**Sat., May 3, 9 am.** New Croton Dam walk, starting at the dam, led by Carl Oechsner. Town of Cortlandt Recreation Dept. Registration required, 914-734-1050.

**Sun., May 4, 10 am.** Guided walk in Manhattan's Highbridge Park, led by Sidney Horenstein. New York City Dept. of Parks & Recreation. See [www.northmanhattanparks.org](http://www.northmanhattanparks.org) Events listing about a month before. Information: 212-927-9568.

**Sat., May 17, 9 am.** Same program as May 3, above.

**Sat. June 7.** Hike the Heights. Fourth annual family-centered hike through the parks of North Manhattan. Led by CLIMB (City Life Is Moving Bodies), a partnership of Columbia Univ. Medical Center and community organizations. Information: 212-740-7292, or e-mail Dr. Lourdes Hernandez-Cordero at [ljh19@columbia.edu](mailto:ljh19@columbia.edu).

**Sat., June 14, 11am-3pm (approx.).** Ossining Village Fair Day. Weir chamber and Aqueduct tunnel visits, led by Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Meet at the weir chamber at the N end of the Aqueduct Double Arch Bridge. No registration required. Information: 914-478-3961.

### MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal          | <input type="checkbox"/> New Member               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$20      | <input type="checkbox"/> Students & retirees \$10 |
| <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 Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

*Please let us know if you would like to volunteer.*

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

## Funding for the Aqueduct (continued):

ASSEMBLYMAN SHELDON SILVER

SPEAKER, NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 932

ALBANY, NY 12248

518-455-3791; [SPEAKER@ASSEMBLY.STATE.NY.US](mailto:SPEAKER@ASSEMBLY.STATE.NY.US)

ASSEMBLYMAN HERMAN FARRELL, JR.

CHAIRMAN, ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 923

ALBANY, NY 12248

518-455-5491; [FARRELLH@ASSEMBLY.STATE.NY.US](mailto:FARRELLH@ASSEMBLY.STATE.NY.US)

[ONE "EL" CORRECT]

The generic address for writing to any state legislator is: For Senate members: Jane Doe, NYS Senate, Albany, NY 12247; For Assembly members: John Doe, NYS Assembly, Albany, NY 12248.

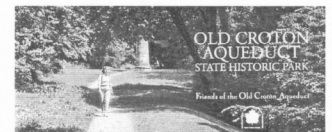


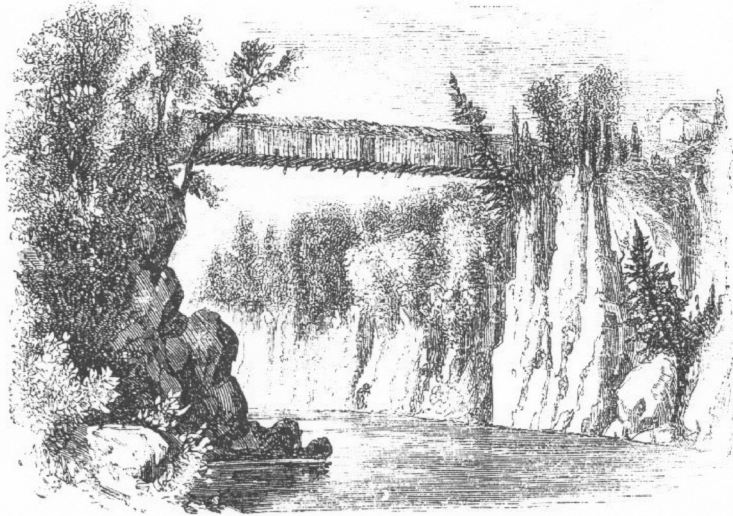
*The High Bridge's 155th birthday cake.*

**To our members who have not yet sent in their renewal: we depend on and appreciate members' support. Thank you!**

### 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. Please specify which map(s) you want. Send a check for the total to the Friends at 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522. For the name of a retailer, call 914-478-3961 or go to [www.aqueduct.org](http://www.aqueduct.org).





"High Bridge Over the Croton." This covered bridge spanned the Croton Gorge. It eventually collapsed, possibly in the late 1890s. From "The Hudson: From the Wilderness to the Sea," Benson J. Lossing, 1866. Reprinted in 2000 by Black Dome Press Corp., Hensonville, NY 12439.

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

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Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct  
Keeper's House  
15 Walnut Street  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

Friends' Annual Meeting  
March 30, 2008, 2 pm  
See p. 6



### 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: Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St. Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109; telephone 914-693-4117; website: [www.aqueduct.org](http://www.aqueduct.org).

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