



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter

No. 16, Winter 2003/04

Location of a Manhattan Ventilator Discovered, or Can a Family Have the Aqueduct in its Genes?

Bill Logan is starting to suspect the answer to the above question is yes. Bill has strong ties to the Aqueduct. He is a member of the board of the Friends, and for 18 years has lived in a house in Hastings whose yard stretches to the trail.

While looking through family photos, Bill came upon a batch of negatives and had them developed. Among the resulting prints was the astonishing picture reproduced here, taken about 1910. It shows the rambling, turreted, multi-story home of his great-grandparents at 888 St. Nicholas Avenue, on the east side of the avenue between 154th and 155th St. in Manhattan. Directly in front of this exuberant structure is, unmistakably, a ventilator of the Old Croton Aqueduct, in apparently pristine condition. Bill identified the address from the envelope in which he found the negatives.

The house was a few blocks south of Coogan's Bluff, a name that will resonate with New York baseball buffs as the fabled cliff from which generations of Giants fans watched the games at the Polo Grounds below. The Aqueduct ran right past

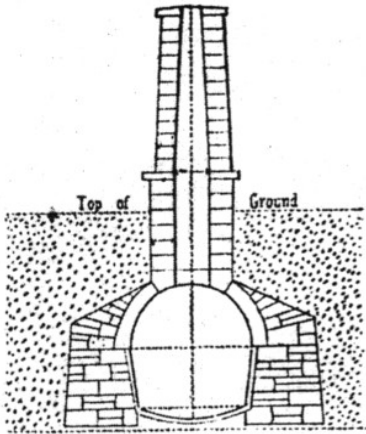
the clifftop, which is at the south end of Highbridge Park, so the location of a ventilator in front of the house



*Aqueduct ventilator in front of 888 St. Nicholas Ave., 1910.
(Courtesy of William Fox Logan)*

- just a little further along the water tunnel route - makes perfect sense. Today there is no trace of either structure at the site, now occupied by a New York City Department of Environmental Protection facility.

Ventilators, conical stone towers about 20 feet high, were placed about a mile apart along the Aqueduct "to give free circulation of air through the aqueduct," in the words of its chief engineer, John Jervis. Approximately every third ventilator had a door at its base, permitting workers direct access into tunnel.



Cross-section of a ventilator, opening into the horseshoe-shaped water tunnel.

(Scribner's Monthly, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1877, courtesy of C. Fahn)

Most of the Westchester towers still stand like friendly sentinels along the trail, some with the names of the contractors and engineers who worked on that section of the Aqueduct inscribed in the stone. But until now the location of any of the towers south of the present

Westchester-New York City boundary was unknown, other than those at both ends of the High Bridge.

Getting back to the Logans, in addition to Bill's great-grandparents, his

grandfather and his great-great-grandmother lived in the house on St. Nicholas Avenue. That's three generations, and if you add the Hastings residency of Bill and his children, it makes a total of five generations of the Logan family who have lived next to the Aqueduct. Only Bill's father missed out, since he visited the St. Nicholas Ave. house but didn't live there.

Even that is not the end of the story. Bill, an architect, played a major role in the improvements made at the Overseer's House in the late 1990s by Friends of the Aqueduct volunteers. On one of those summer workdays he met and later married Holly Daly, an active Friends member who was then living in a house backing up to the Aqueduct in Dobbs Ferry. Holly is a board member and the Friends' membership secretary.

If any readers have similar treasures in their own family archives, please get in touch. This is one of our best means of uncovering more Aqueduct history.

Croton Water Over the Dam

The dams in the Croton system were unusually full this autumn, reflecting the heavy rainfall in the region and warmer-than-customary temperatures in early November that delayed the start of the freeze cycle in the uplands. Most of the spillage from the dozen dams on the Croton River and its tributaries pours through the system "from top to bottom," finally flowing over the spillway of the New Croton Dam. The result was a spectacle of foaming water and misty spray against rock walls - easily viewed by visiting Westchester County's Croton Gorge Park (off Route 129) at the base of the spillway. As a consequence, the Croton River below the dam was flowing high and fast, partly submerging the trees along its banks.

To learn some intriguing facts about the natural history of the Croton River, take a look at the well-illustrated piece on the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's excellent web site www.waterwire.net, with thanks to Dale Ramsey for letting the Friends know about it. Once you're in the site, click on About MWA; then, in the search box, type in Croton River. The essay is part of "MetroWaters," an MWA series about important but sometimes overlooked waterways.

Rainstorms also take their toll on trees along the trail. Michael Boyle, State Parks' Aqueduct trail manager, notes that the Aqueduct suffered greater tree loss from the downpour on September 23 than from Hurricane Isabel's passage through the area a few days before. The species lost varied from large hemlock, oak, and cherry to medium and small maples.



The Croton River below New Croton Dam on November 2, 2003. (C. Fahn)

A Chance to End Detour at Sleepy Hollow High School

Aqueduct users are all too familiar with the awkward detour required at Sleepy Hollow High School, where a breezeway connecting two buildings sits astride and blocks the trail. The breezeway is commonly locked, forcing walkers and bikers to head downslope and eastward toward Andre Brook, around the back of one of the buildings, up or down a steep, narrow flight of a dozen steps—especially difficult for bikers—and then back upslope.



*Above: Breezeway blocking the Aqueduct trail.
Left: Stairway behind high school building, part of the present detour.
(Photos by C. Fahn)*

An opportunity to regain direct passage along the trail has arisen with the release for public comment of a plan for major construction by the Tarrytown Union Free School District, which encompasses the villages of Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow. The plan includes major expansion of the high school building trail users now must circumvent, obliging them to get around an even larger structure.

In comments submitted to district superintendent Dr. Howard W. Smith, Friends of the Aqueduct wrote: "The breezeway situation has been the subject of complaints for many years. Now, with all the school construction work being planned, there seems every reason and opportunity to restore full access to the trail

and eliminate the detour altogether." Dr. Smith, at a followup meeting with State park managers Alix Schnee and Michael Boyle and representatives of the Friends, responded that the school district is receptive to achieving this goal, and will consider a solution that would permit trail users to pass straight through the breezeway at all times.

Additional points discussed were backyard encroachments on the Aqueduct footpath, including the segment north of the school breezeway, and the possibilities for incorporating the Aqueduct in particular and local land use history in general into the schools' art, science and history programs. The Friends also urged the school district to seek an alternative to the current proposal for "piping" another 75 feet of historic Andre Brook on school grounds, in light of current trends towards restoring local streams, not burying them further.

5K Run for Ossining Schools Draws Big Turnout

Despite dismal weather, more than 500 high-spirited folks of all ages turned out on Saturday, September 13th, for a 5-km run/2-mile walk along a loop route on the Aqueduct in Ossining. This was the inaugural fund-raising event of Ossining M.A.T.T.E.R.S., a new foundation that will support special programs for the Ossining School District. The enthusiastic crowd gathered for the start beneath an arch of balloons at the south end of the famous Aqueduct bridge spanning the Sing Sing Kill, or stream.

Celebrity cachet was provided by Ossining resident Khalid Khannouchi, "fastest marathon runner in the world," who served as greeter and official starter, while the Westchester Track Club timed the runners. Mayor John Perillo and other local officials were on hand for



Get ready, get set . . .

Ossining Run (cont'd)

the event as was Michael Boyle, Manager of Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, who opened the Ossining weir, situated over the Kill, and guided those interested in seeing the inside of the historic water tunnel. For further details and many photos that convey the excited mood that prevailed, go to www.ossiningmatters.org.



Go! Runners on Aqueduct bridge in Ossining. Starter, famed runner Khalid Khannouchi, is at right with arms raised.

Aqueduct Publication Available

The 1992 ceremony marking the Old Croton Aqueduct's designation as a National Historic Landmark, the highest federal landmark status possible, was held at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers. In honor of the designation and to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Aqueduct, the museum mounted a major exhibit entitled "The Old Croton Aqueduct: Rural Resources Meet Urban Needs," and issued a collection of essays and exhibit catalogue with the same title. The 64-page, soft-cover, 8-1/2 x 11" publication is still available. The essays, abundantly illustrated in black and white, are as follows:

—*Water for the City*, by Jeffrey A. Kroessler

—*Preliminary Plans for the Old Croton Aqueduct and the Structure of its Engineering Department*, by F. Daniel Larkin

—*The Engineering Design and Hydraulic Concepts for the Croton Aqueduct*, by Emory Kemp

—*Temperament, Temperance and Tolerance: An Appraisal of Conflicts over Land Values and Laborers Along the Line of the Croton Aqueduct*, by Tema Harnik

—*The Croton Aqueduct and the Suburbanization of Westchester*, by Roger Panetta

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—*Celebrating the Aqueduct: Pastoral and Urban Ideals*, by Laura Vookles Hardin

The volume can be purchased for \$10. at the museum (call for hours, 914-963-4550) or address mail orders to Hudson River Museum, Attn: Sharon O'Shea, 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers, NY 10701, and enclose a check for \$13 which includes shipping.

Letter

To the editor: I was delighted with the directions provided in the Summer newsletter (no. 15) on the route from the Aqueduct trail to the Croton-Harmon MetroNorth station. There was even a patisserie at the end of the trek, just down from Riverside Drive on the last stretch to the station.

Dale Ramsey
New York City

Hudson RiverWalk to Include Aqueduct

Westchester County's proposed RiverWalk, a 46.6-mile continuous trail for pedestrians and bikers along the county's entire Hudson River shoreline, will incorporate parts of the Old Croton Aqueduct trail when direct access along the waterfront is not feasible. A preliminary plan for the route, which will link trails, esplanades, and boardwalks, was released in September by the county Department of Planning. The Aqueduct segments of RiverWalk are in Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, Mount Pleasant, Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings, and Yonkers. Further information may be obtained from the Planning Department, tel. 914-995-4400.



C. Fahn

At Van Cortlandt Manor's River Day, Aug. 2, Jean Horkans, a volunteer from Ossining, shows the trail map to Carolyn Driessnack of Yonkers.

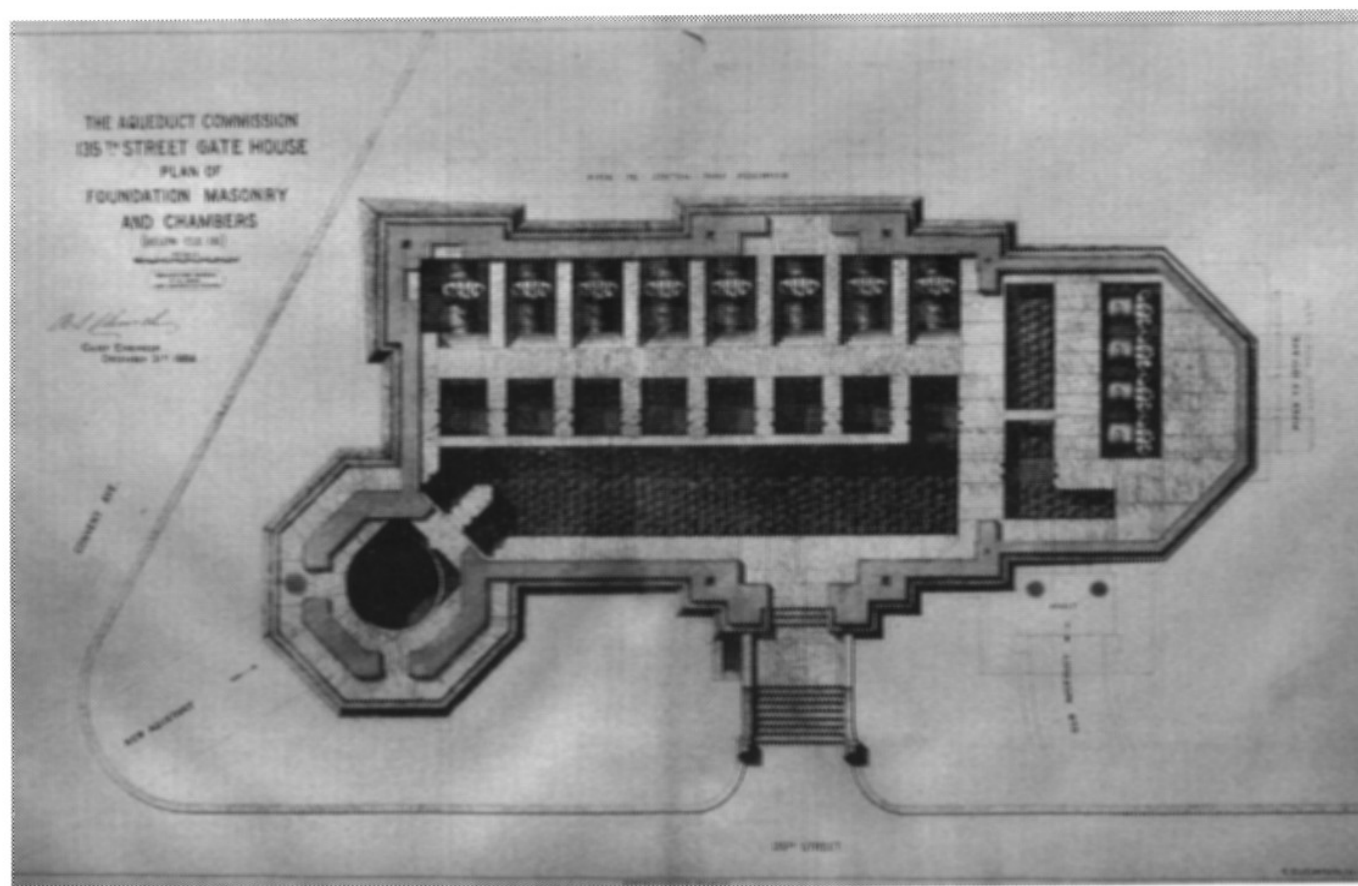
135th Street Gatehouse: A "Theater of Water" to Become a Theater in Fact

Manhattan's castle-like 135th St. gatehouse, long an important operations center for the Croton system, is about to take on new life as a 200-seat flexible performance, rehearsal, and support space. Groundbreaking for the project, which is being undertaken by Aaron Davis Hall, a prominent performing arts center across Convent Ave. from the gatehouse at the edge of the City College campus, took place on Oct. 17, co-hosted by Sen. Charles Schumer and Congressman Charles Rangel. The 1890 stone gatehouse, notable for its complex waterworks, ornate design, and impressive dimensions, was designed by Frederick S. Cook. Taken out of service in 1984, it is a New York City landmark also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The gatehouse is one of the few structures where the Old (1842) and New (1890) Croton aqueducts came

together, the 1842 aqueduct having been rerouted in this area to enter the new gatehouse. According to Friends member John Bartelstone, in actuality it was two independent gatehouses with a sluice connecting the two inflow chambers. Entering water flowed through a series of chambers and vaults into a network of eight 48-in. pipes on the south (downtown) side, and four on the west (Tenth Ave., now Amsterdam Ave.) side. A very flexible system allowed each aqueduct to serve its own downstream pipes, those of the other, or both, and could send water directly to Manhattan neighborhoods and to either or both of the two reservoirs in Central Park. Vestiges have been found of the living quarters of the two- to three-man crew that operated the gatehouse.

The imposing main space, a street level headhouse sheltering six stories of underground waterworks, is approximately 37 x 100 x 47 ft. high, with ornamental



South is at the top of this 1886 plan view of the gatehouse. The Old and New Croton aqueducts enter from north-northwest and northeast, respectively. On the right, four pipes exit to Tenth (now Amsterdam) Ave., and, top, eight to the south. (From Report to the Aqueduct Commissioners, 1887, City of New York, B.S. Church, Chief Engineer, C. Gustafson, delineator; courtesy of J. Bartelstone)



*135th St. gatehouse, foreground, and Aaron Davis Hall, left. View south.
(Photo by Cervin Robinson, courtesy of Aaron Davis Hall)*

135th Street Gatehouse (cont'd.)

brickwork along the top of its walls. The beauty of many elements, including some that could not have been seen by the public, and the quality of construction are considered remarkable. The \$12 million renovation project will extend down into the top two of the six stories belowgrade. The arch separating the Old and New Aqueduct sides may become a proscenium. A new roof, restoration of the boarded-up windows, and replication of their stained glass are part of the plan.

The city's departments of Cultural Affairs and Design and Construction are collaborating in the project, and the gatehouse will remain in city ownership. Aaron Davis Hall, founded in 1979, is an independent nonprofit organization affiliated with City College. Its executive director, Patricia Cruz, calls the renovation—first conceived 15 years ago—"an engineering feat of the 19th century becoming a cultural resource for the 21st century." With it will come a heightened public awareness of the historic Croton system.

Former Trail Manager Honored

Brian Goodman, who retired in 2002 after 10 years as Aqueduct manager for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, has been given the agency's Maple Leaf Award in recognition of his remarkable dedication and service. The winner of this award is chosen solely by his or her peers, other New York State park managers.

Another aspect of Brian's mission was recognized this fall by the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, which coordinates volunteer maintenance of metro area hiking trails. Brian was awarded the Major Welch Trail Partner Award, given to "government or private [Trail Conference] partners who have provided long and/or significant help to the hiking community. . . The award cited Brian's "wit and wisdom" in helping the Trail Conference be a better partner with State Parks. Congratulations, Brian!



CALENDAR ITEMS

Saturday, December 27: Westchester Trails Assoc., 5-mile walk, Sleepy Hollow area; 591-7038.

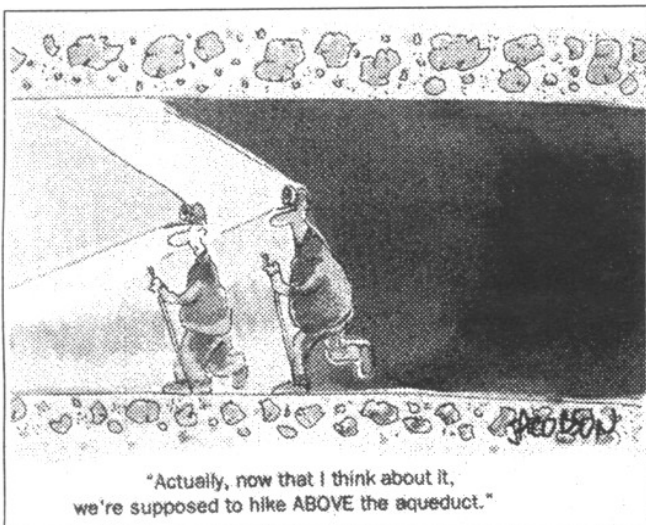
Tuesday, December 30, 7:30 p.m.: Talk by Brian Goodman, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society; 674-1007.

Sunday, February 1, 2004: Westchester Trails Assoc., 8-mile hike, Scarborough/Dobbs Ferry; 472-3525.

**For inquiries about Old Croton Aqueduct
State Historic Park or to report trail
conditions, call Park Manager Michael
Boyle at 914-693-5259.**

Aqueduct News / In Brief

The **New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show**, on until Jan. 11, has added the High Bridge and High Bridge Tower to the New York City landmarks along the route. The miniatures of these Aqueduct structures are of oak, cedar bark, willow twigs, and other plant materials. Thanks to Holly Daly for noting this. . . . The Aqueduct's **proximity to Metro-North's Hudson Line** is key to the trail's accessibility and popularity. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of today's Hudson Line, Friends of Philipse Manor Hall and the New York Transit Museum co-sponsored an all-day trip on October 25th that included a visit to the Ossining weir. . . . Westchester County Historical Society's new, large-format volume, **"Picturing Our Past: National Register Sites in Westchester County,"** includes under the heading "Triumph of Engineering," three pages of color photos of Croton system structures, including the New Croton Dam and the crossing of the Saw Mill River in Yonkers.



(From *The Journal News*, May 20, 2003. Courtesy of David Jacobson and Gannett News, with thanks to Carolyn Driessnack and William Cassella.)

An Easy Gift



The Friends' map/guide of the Aqueduct in Westchester fits into a holiday stocking or regular business envelope. It can be purchased at:

Cornelia Cotton Gallery, 111 Grand Ave., Croton-on-Hudson

Wondrous Things, 4 Old Post Road South, Croton-on-Hudson

Art Barn, 211 North Highland Ave., Ossining

Ossining Heritage Area Visitor Center, Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, located next to the trail, Ossining

Hudson Office Supply, 10 Main St., Tarrytown

Becker's, 57 Main St., Irvington

River Gallery, 39 Main St., Irvington

Cary's Pharmacy, 105 Main St., Dobbs Ferry

Corey Glass Picture Framing, 3 Main St., Hastings-on-Hudson

Good Yarns, 8 Main St., Hastings-on-Hudson

The Office Ink, 572 Warburton Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson

Hudson River Museum Shop, 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers

Posman Books, Grand Central Terminal, Manhattan

Urban Center Books, 457 Madison Ave., betw 50th and 51st Sts., Manhattan

By mail, send a check for \$5.25 per map (includes shipping and handling) to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

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

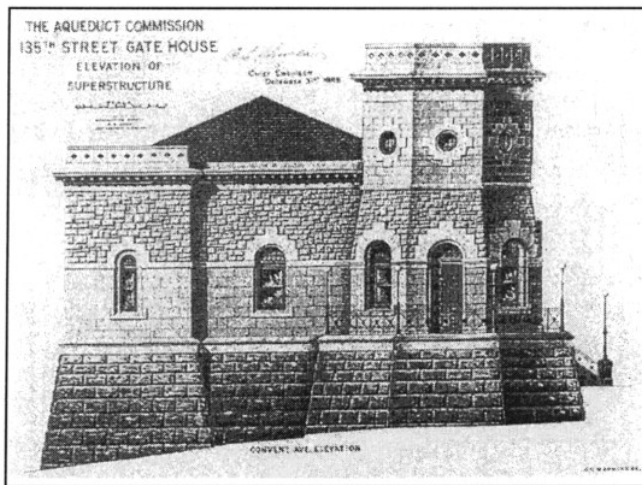
Please make check payable to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Send it with this coupon to the Friends at Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109.

Name _____

Address _____

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Please let us know if you would like to volunteer.



*Convent Ave. elevation of 135th St. Gatehouse.
(From Report to the Aqueduct Commissioners, 1887, City
of New York, B.S. Church, Chief Engineer, C.C. Manning,
delineator; courtesy of J. Bartelstone)*

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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