



# Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

*Newsletter*

No. 9, July 2001

## The TurkeyWalk: An Aqueduct Tradition in the Making

*Jocko Lloyd*

As you swelter through the next few months, think about joining the TurkeyWalk, an informal community event started three years ago when a small but hearty group of us left Croton Dam early the day after Thanksgiving and walked on the Aqueduct until we ran out of daylight in Hastings. Since then, others have taken part by "TurkeyWalking" the whole distance or a portion of it. This tradition- in-the-making takes advantage of all the Aqueduct offers: great river views, a walk in the foot- steps of history, encounters with wildlife, and plenty of exercise.

Whether one walks the entire 20 or so miles is not the point. Getting up the day after eating way too much Thanksgiving dinner and joining us at some juncture of the day's journey is. In fact, we believe we have found the perfect answer to the question of what to do the Friday after Thanksgiving.

"It was an inspired creation," says Lisa Gelb, who has participated in all three TurkeyWalks with her sons. "It's now something that defines our holiday weekend - as much of a tradition as watching the parade. It really gets the kids to do something that, at least when they started, they were pretty sure they couldn't. And you get a completely different view of the rivertowns."

As legend now has it, the TurkeyWalk, begun in 1998, was inspired by our family's many Aqueduct walks

and the appealing notion of walking most of the trail in one day. With each walk, the traditions and stories build. During the first walk, without the assistance of the Friends' beautiful map, we became lost in Ossining and began knocking on doors asking where the trail went. "Trail?" asked the bewildered occupants of a house built right on top of it. In 1999, the group was



*TurkeyWalk 2000: The lunch bunch*



At ventilator 15, Tarrytown, left to right: Malcolm MacDougall, Jim MacDougall, Evan Gelb, and Travis Lloyd, all from Ardsley. (Photo by J. Lloyd)

greeted by a beautiful lifting fog at the Croton Reservoir, out of which suddenly emerged Aqueduct Site Manager Brian Goodman, like an apparition, handing out copies of an Aqueduct guide. This past year, despite bitter cold, a small group was able to do the entire hike without injuries or short cab rides (no small accomplishment as leg strains and running late to meet the lunch crowd were challenges of the first two T'Walks).

Did I mention lunch? Although one objective is to walk off the feast of the day before, by the time you have been tramping six and a half hours with only water and a few trail snacks, you are more than ready to pause at Remi's Hudson Cafe in Irvington for a well-deserved feast, a toast, and a chance to sit down and tell TurkeyWalk stories to the newcomers. Lunch at 2:30 also offers the chance for the youngest walkers (half have been under 10) to join us for the more modest last section. On TurkeyWalk 2000, Jim MacDougall outdistanced the kid's group by walking 10 miles into the TurkeyWalk Hall of Fame. His secret? "Five desserts the night before!"

By the time children arrive, some of the 8 am starters have gone home to soak their feet. Part of the fun is that new people join in along the way and quit when they've had enough. Hence, the conversation changes almost as frequently as the views! Thankfully, MetroNorth has made it easier for us by stationing a way to get back to our cars every few miles. We have had people join us at Ossining (10:00), Tarrytown (12:30, at ventilator #12), and Irvington (for lunch).

We hope to see you for the Fourth Annual TurkeyWalk. Mark your calendar now: **TurkeyWalk, Friday, Nov. 23rd, 8 am, Croton Dam.** (If it rains, we go at 8:00 on Saturday, Nov. 24th.) Bring whomever you want, whatever you want, and enjoy the hike!

## Walling in the Trail in Tarrytown

For Aqueduct trail users, a developer's plan for constructing an eight-unit residential structure behind the existing eight-family building at 224 Broadway in Tarrytown would mean a crowded westward view, a larger parking lot abutting the trail, and the loss of tall, beautiful trees. The site is next door to the Medical Arts building (200 Broadway), near Prospect Ave. Across from it, on the east side of the Aqueduct, is the Mozartina Music Arts Conservatory.

The project takes advantage of the trail in its name, "Aqueduct Courtyard," but as now proposed would have a deleterious effect on the trail. The new building would be about 28-1/2 feet tall and over 100 feet long (north to south). It would sit in what is the backyard, now mostly green, of 224 Broadway, and would add 20 new parking spaces to the 20 already there. It would also bring its long building wall parallel and much closer to the trail than the attractive rear wall of 224 Broadway.



View of back of 224 Broadway from trail. The front of the building is deeply set back from Broadway. (C. Fahn)

**The final public hearing on this proposal is at the Tarrytown Planning Board meeting on Monday, July 23rd, at 8 p.m.** We urge Tarrytown trail users to attend and ask officials both to scale down the project and reconfigure it to minimize its visual impact on the trail. If you can't attend, please write or call the Planning Board (Chairman: Dr. Stanley Friedlander, 631-1349; address: Village Hall, 21 Wildey St., Tarrytown, NY 10591-3199).

➤ **High Bridge Campaign Launched.** On Sunday, March 11th, *The Daily News* launched a campaign to reopen the High Bridge, probably the most famous single element of the Old Croton Aqueduct. In an eloquent Special Editorial, reprinted here, the *News* proposes a history trail following the Aqueduct route through the Bronx and across the bridge into Manhattan. The Friends are participating in a coalition of community groups forming to press for reopening of the bridge.

# WALK HISTORY'S PATH

**R**ome, capital of the ancient world, drew its lifeblood — its water — from its great stone aqueducts. Likewise, New York, capital of the modern world, grew to greatness on the might of its aqueducts. Yet the story of New York's first great water channel, the Old Croton Aqueduct, and the central role it played in transforming the city into a world-class metropolis, is largely forgotten.

Fortunately, there is a tangible reminder of this historic legacy: the oldest extant bridge to Manhattan, the graceful and lofty High Bridge, a Roman-style aqueduct-cum-footpath spanning the Harlem River.

Sadly, however, though it was declared a city landmark in 1970, the bridge has been sealed up for decades, off limits to the people of a city whose greatness it helped forge. It is time — long past time, actually — to reopen the High Bridge and capitalize on its wondrous promenade and panoramic skyline vistas.

An engineering marvel in the mid-19th century, the span was a tourist attraction in its day, and it could be so again. All that's required is to extend the Old Croton Aqueduct Trailway state park from its current end in Yonkers, across the High Bridge and into Manhattan along the route of the original conduit.

**A**s important to city history as the Erie Canal, the aqueduct brought pure water south from the Croton River 41 miles away to a city so plagued by cholera that even children were drinking alcohol to escape disease. Completed in 1842, the system was designed to carry 90 million gallons a day. Yet in a few decades, a skyrocketing population had made it obsolete. A second Croton Aqueduct was finished in 1890. But by 1955, the old system had outlived its usefulness and was discontinued.

The trailway — which covers the original brick-lined water pipe — has been a state park since 1968 in Westchester, where it is a mecca for walkers, joggers and cyclists. But in the city, the route has been mostly abandoned.

Making it a history trail through the Bronx and along city streets to the aqueduct's terminus at what is now the New York Public Library at Fifth Ave. and 42nd St. would be simple and relatively inexpensive.

And the benefits would be enormous.

In Boston, to cite one example, the red-brick Freedom Trail linking Revolutionary War sites is a boon to both tourism and economic development. A similar trail could produce the same results for New York.

And what a trail it would be.

In the Bronx's Van Cortlandt Park, the path, though bisected by the Major Deegan Expressway, is still visible; farther south, it becomes a mall in the middle of University Ave. Starting from the north, walkers on the route would pass Lehman College, whose gym provided the first meeting place of the United Nations Security Council. Nearby is Kingsbridge Armory, the world's largest,

which is being renovated by the city. Not far away is Bronx Community College, with its elegant domed library, designed by Stanford White when the site was owned by New York University, and its notable Hall of Fame for Great Americans, an outdoor colonnade of busts by world-class sculptors.

The route would continue south across the High Bridge into Manhattan, through High Bridge Park, noted for its soaring, landmarked tower, and on to the Morris-Jumel Mansion, one of George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters. And — sports fans, take note — along the way, a crumbling stairway at 158th St. and Edgecombe Ave. marks the last surviving relic of the famed Polo Grounds, where the New York Giants' Bobby Thomson's shot was heard 'round the world 50 years ago this October.

Blocks away is Hamilton Grange, the one-time home of Alexander Hamilton. Then come City College, Columbia University and the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, the world's largest Gothic cathedral. Farther south are Central Park and the world-renowned museums: Natural History, the Metropolitan, the Frick and MOMA.

The final jog, down Fifth Ave., passes such great religious institutions as Temple Emanu-El and St. Patrick's Cathedral and ends at the library, where the imposing reservoir once stood.

Any one of these sites is worth celebrating. Together, they tell an epic tale of the world's greatest city and its people. All these institutions would benefit by being linked, and all could be expected to support and sustain the trail.

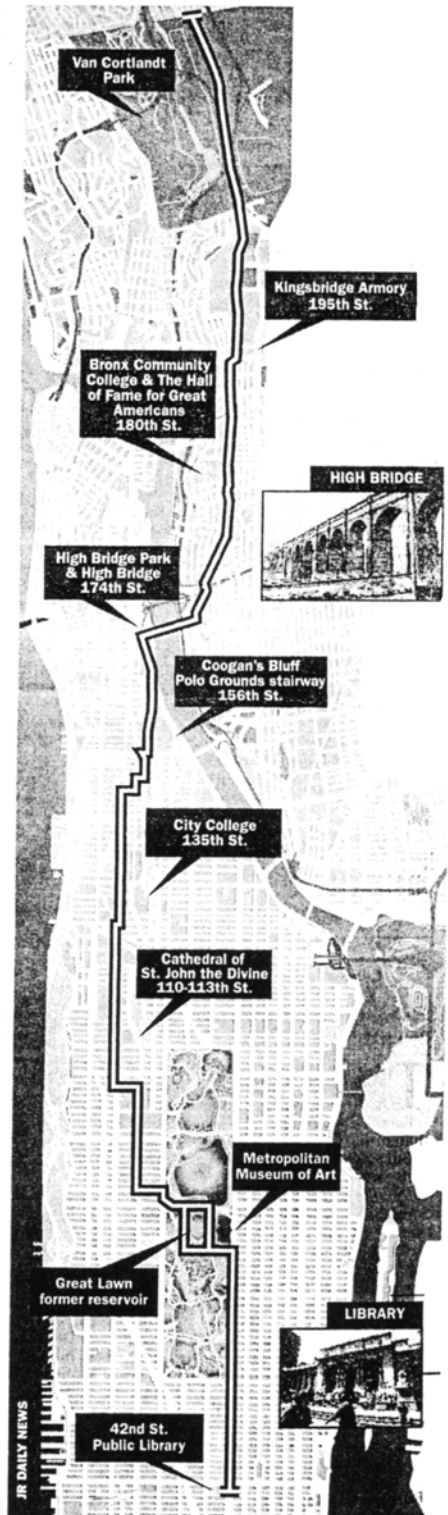
Creating this engaging walk would require little more than printing maps and posting explanatory markers at the sites. Except, of course, for revitalizing the High Bridge. That, no doubt, would cost millions. But, after inquiries by the Daily News, the city has put out a contract for inspecting the span with an eye toward reclaiming it. And tomorrow, a coalition that is forming to support the bridge's restoration will have its first public meeting at Yeshiva University's Bellfry Hall at 6:30 p.m.

**C**learly, there is a will; now the city and the state must find the way.

The reasons for closing the bridge — rampant crime and vandalism — no longer exist, thanks to the heroic work of the NYPD. High Bridge Park, once a dangerous dumping ground for stolen cars, has been rejuvenated, thanks in part to Bette Midler's group, New York Restoration. And with the 33rd Precinct stationhouse going up next door, security on the historic span will no longer be a problem.

Since the state already runs the successful Westchester part of the trail, the new Bronx/Manhattan portion could be a state or city park — or the governments could share the cost.

New York would then have a link to sites famous and forgotten — parks, museums and schools; poor areas and rich. Our past and our future.



## DAILY NEWS

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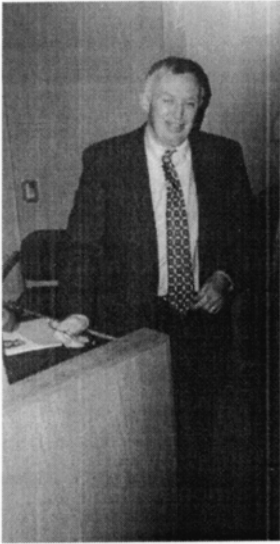
RUTH LANDA, Sunday Opinion Editor THOMAS P. RUIS, Design Director

## HIGHLIGHTS ALONG OLD CROTON TRAIL

- Bryant Park/New York Public Library
  - Rockefeller Center
  - St. Patrick's Cathedral
  - Museum of Modern Art
  - Central Park
  - Temple Emanu-El
  - Frick Collection
  - Metropolitan Museum
  - Central Park's Great Lawn
  - Seneca Village
- American Museum of Natural History
  - Frederick Douglass Houses
  - Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine
  - Columbia University
  - Morningside Park
  - Grant's Tomb / Riverside Park
  - General Grant Houses
  - 125th St. / Harlem
  - City College
- Riverbank State Park
  - Hamilton Grange
  - Trinity Church Cemetery
  - Audubon Terrace
  - Coogan's Bluff / Polo Grounds
  - High Bridge Park
  - Morris-Jumel Mansion
  - Yeshiva University
  - High Bridge Tower
  - The High Bridge
  - Harlem River
- Bronx Community College / The Hall of Fame for Great Americans
  - Kingsbridge Armory
  - Jerome Park Reservoir
  - EDUCATION ROW  
Walton High School  
Lehman College  
Harris Park  
Bronx High School of Science  
DeWitt Clinton High School
  - Van Cortlandt Park

## "A Fabulous, Incredible Achievement"

So Professor Kenneth T. Jackson of Columbia University, speaking to a full house at Phelps Hospital auditorium on April 1<sup>st</sup>, described the gravity-powered system that brings mountain water to New York and Westchester's millions. For cities as for people, without water, there is no life. Thus, in the Laws of the Indies, issued in 1573 by King Philip II of Spain, then a major world power, explorers were instructed to place new settlements where there was a water supply, above all other considerations.



*Kenneth Jackson*

Professor Jackson, in the Friends-sponsored talk, "Water and the City," discussed urban water systems in general and New York City's in particular. The importance of the public's vote in 1835 to bring clean water to Manhattan from the distant Croton River lay in its affirmation that water supply should be a public, not a private, function. The referendum followed decades of devastating fires, cholera epidemics, a virtually unusable water supply stored in The Colleck (on what is now Foley Square in Lower Manhattan), and the sorry history of the private

Manhattan Company, chartered ostensibly to provide clean water but actually to conduct banking, establishing the forerunner of the (former) Chase Manhattan Bank.

Philadelphia's pioneering system, developed by Benjamin Latrobe and completed in 1816, predated New York's. Using steam power to pump water from the Schuylkill River, it was the greatest water system in North America and perhaps the world at that time, and a major factor in that city's early ascendancy. Local officials recognized that the purpose of the system was not to make money but to ensure the success of the city.

Interesting comparisons emerged. While New York and Los Angeles both "take someone else's water," the former is in a rainy area and the latter is a desert - the Dodgers played in LA for 10 years before being rained out. The Mississippi River is polluted by the time it reaches New Orleans; in contrast, the Rhine flows through eight European countries, each of which must put back in the same amount they take out, and the water they return to the river must be clean.



*Fairmont Water Works, Philadelphia*

Audience discussion ranged wide: the looming federal requirement to filter Croton water; should we learn to live with crabgrass on our lawns? - and today's challenge of keeping our water pure and maintaining the pipes of an aging system.

The Friends are indebted to Professor Jackson for a stimulating afternoon, and congratulate him on his recent appointment as president of the New-York Historical Society, whose collection includes archival material from the original Croton Aqueduct.



**Lucky Day for Trail Users:** On a misty Friday the 13th of April, Governor George Pataki, at Hastings' waterfront MacEachron Park, announced a state grant of \$335,000 to the village toward acquisition from the Graham-Windham School of 14 acres of undeveloped land for preservation as open space. The Aqueduct cuts through the parcel, which extends from the Hastings-Yonkers border north to Rowley's Brook, and westward to the Hudson. Besides preserving a green buffer for Aqueduct users, the parcel will eventually be part of a direct link, via a new village trail, between what the Governor called "our treasured Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park" and the Hastings waterfront. L. to r.: Hastings Mayor Lee Kinally, Governor Pataki, State Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro. (Photo by C. Fahn)



## Book Review

*Robert Kornfeld, Jr., AIA*

**The Croton Dams and Aqueduct.** Christopher R. Tompkins. Images of America series. 2000, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC. 128 pp. \$18.99. ISBN 0-7385-0455-6.

Mr. Tompkins's interesting and worthwhile book contains a wealth of photos of the New Croton Dam under construction. These images tell the story of the immensity of the work, which went on from 1892 to 1906, and the skill and courage of the legion of Italian immigrant stone masons who built it. The construction sequence is clearly described, along with the perils and hardships faced by the workers, and the author evokes a strong sense of local history and color.

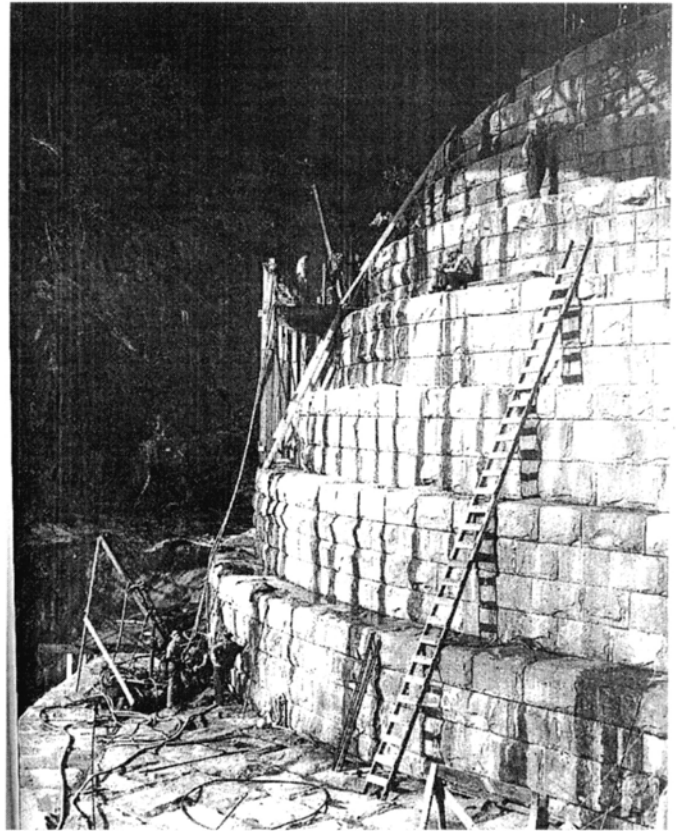
In the captions to the photos, the book documents the lives of local residents who were involved with the dam or were displaced by the waters of the New Croton Reservoir. It is also a family chronicle, for the Tompkins family has lived in the Croton Valley since the 1700's. John M. Tompkins, the author's grandfather, was Superintendent of the Croton Reservoir from the 1930s until the 1970s, and left a proud legacy of service. There is also a likely photo of Alphonse Fteley, chief designer of the dam, in the group picture on p. 104.

While this book merits a wholehearted recommendation, the reader should not expect a comprehensive overall history of the Croton system. It is a collection of images with extended captions, mostly about the New Croton Dam, with some images of the Old Croton Dam and little about the history or design of the aqueducts or other components of the Croton system. But for the strength of its visual record and a filling out of the human and social side of the story, it is certain to be of interest to Croton devotees.

I would like to add several clarifications and comments to assist readers in understanding the development and configuration of the Croton system and its relation to the New Croton Dam.

It is interesting to note that the New Croton Aqueduct does not touch the New Croton Dam. The only aqueduct that passes through the new dam is the Old Croton Aqueduct. This is because the new aqueduct does not follow the old aqueduct down the Croton Gorge toward the Hudson River, but tunnels straight south to the valley of the Saw Mill.

The caption for the map on the bottom of p. 25 states, "This . . . indicates the old and new aqueduct." In fact, this is an 1846 map by Schramke and the line taken for the New Croton Aqueduct is instead the New York and Albany Railroad (Harlem Line). The New Croton Aque-



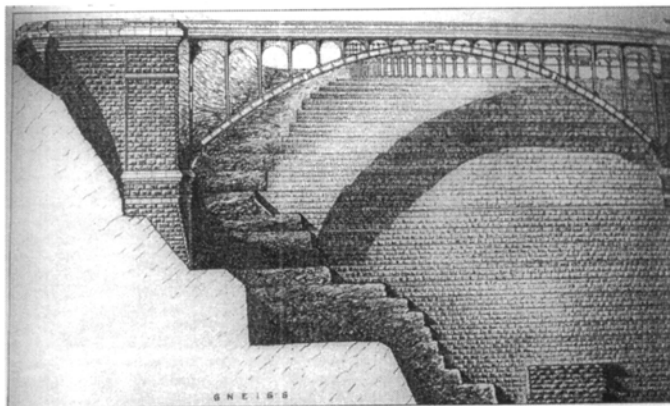
*1956 photo of the Croton Dam spillway without water. From The Croton Dams and Aqueduct, p. 119.*

duct was constructed in the 1880s and went into service in 1890. The routes of the New and Old aqueducts actually interweave: both start near the Old Croton Dam, then meet at Jerome Park Reservoir in the Bronx. The two aqueducts then cross the Harlem River next to each other, the Old over the High Bridge and the New through a tunnel. They meet at the 135<sup>th</sup> Street gate house in Manhattan, and finally flow from side-by-side gate houses into the New Reservoir (now named for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis) in Central Park. The interconnection of the two aqueducts south of the Saw Mill River is an essential feature.

When the New Croton Aqueduct was designed there was such a storm of controversy over the design and siting of the new dam that it was not clear the dam would ever be built. The dam's history was an epic drama as the dam progressed from the proposed Quaker Bridge Dam of 1882 to the final 1906 version at the Cornell site.

The top photo on p. 25 is of the Old Croton Aqueduct being reconstructed in the wall of the Jerome Park Reservoir in 1898. The New Croton Aqueduct is also a masonry horseshoe arch, but is much larger, having three times the cross-sectional area and capacity of the Old Croton Aqueduct. *(Continued on page 6)*

## Book Review (continued)



*Drawing for the "grand spillway" of a "monument in the making." From The Croton Dams and Aqueduct, p. 29.*

In the bottom photo on p. 27, the large structure on the opposite bank is not a ventilator but rather High Bridge Tower, which contained a 47,000-gallon water tank. This tower, along with a 7-acre reservoir (now reconstructed as a public swimming pool) and a pumping station, comprised the High Service Works. The complex was constructed from 1866 to 1872 to provide sufficient pressure to serve the higher elevations of upper Manhattan, which were above the head of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

**Note:** The New Croton Dam and especially its spillway is probably one of the most beautiful and underappreciated sites in the riertowns region. To see it easily and close up, visit Westchester County's Croton Gorge Park. From Rte. 9 North take Rte. 129 exit; turn left at 2nd light on Rte. 129 and drive about 2 miles. Take access road on the right marked "Croton Dam Park." The view is stunning year round. - Ed.

### Students Adopt Aqueduct "Parklet" in the Bronx

Interest in the Aqueduct's presence in the Bronx is alive and expanding, thanks in part to the Jerome Park Conservancy and New York City Parks Department. An "island" in the street at the intersection of Reservoir and Goulden avenues, right over the Old Croton Aqueduct where it emerges from the south end of Jerome Park Reservoir, has been transformed into the Croton Aqueduct Triangle under Parks' Greenstreets program. At one end of the site, in brick, is an Aqueduct cross-section, filled with blue flowers. River birches, inkberry bushes, Virginia sweet spire, and a ring of ginkgo trees also grace the site.

Students from nearby Walton High School and P.S. 26 were among those attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 11th. Two horticulture classes from Walton, taught by science teachers Mark Stern and Sheila Rosen, and members of a youth program at the Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association, are adopting the site to provide for its maintenance. The newly greened triangle was designed by landscape architect Gail Wittwer-Laird, director of Greenstreets and a dedicated Aqueduct aficionado. The project was orchestrated by the Jerome Park Conservancy. Congratulations to all!



Those at the Croton Aqueduct Triangle ribbon-cutting included (l. to r.) Dart Westphal of Jerome Park Conservancy, Lehman College President Ricardo Fernandez, NYC Parks Commissioner Henry Stern and his faithful dog Boomer, teacher Mark Stern, designer Gail Wittwer-Laird, Karen Argenti of the Conservancy, and Bronx Parks Commissioner William Castro. (Photo courtesy of NYC Parks Dept.)

### Friends Elect New Officers

At the meeting of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct held on March 1, 2001, the following officers and Board of Directors were elected:

**Co-Presidents:** Mavis Cain and Gwen Thomas

**Vice-Presidents:** Edward Brody and Robert Kornfeld, Jr.

**Treasurer:** Constance Porter

**Secretary-Membership:** Holly Daly

**Secretary-Meetings:** Karen Schatzel

**Directors:** William Cassella, Frederick Charles, Cornelia Cotton, Douglas Emilio, Charlotte Fahn, Joseph Koslowski, William Logan, J. Webb Moniz.



**Summit St. Sweep.** Organized by the Friends, a small but mighty crew of Aqueduct volunteers bagged litter and hauled trash to transform the Summit Street stretch of the trail in Yonkers (off Ashburton Ave.) on Saturday, April 28th. Great thanks to all for donating precious weekend time, and to the Yonkers Public Works Department for vital support services. **Top left:** State Historic Site Manager Brian Goodman (on left) and Friends Board member Joe Koslowski. **Above:** Jackie Lorieo. **Left:** A post-cleanup view. Not pictured but also hard at work were Brendan Newcomb, Ed Brody, Gwen Thomas, and Doug Emilio. (Photos by G. Thomas)

## MEMBERSHIP COUPON

### BE A FRIEND!!

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

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

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 Friendsat Overseer's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109

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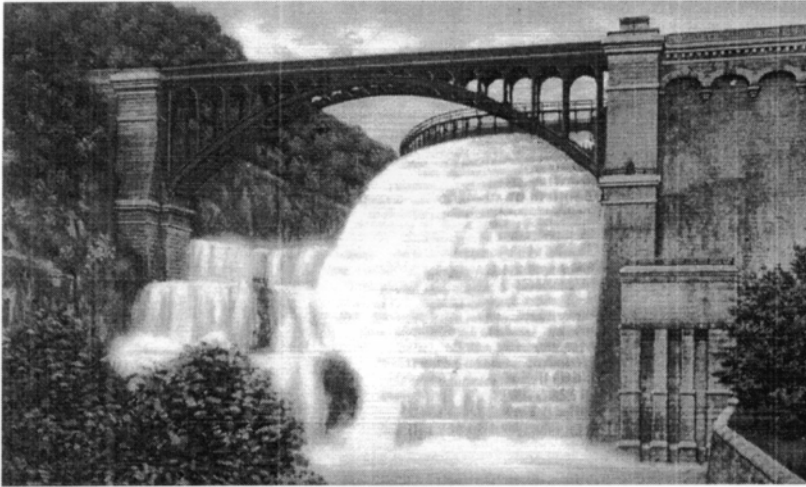
#### Associate Editor:

Mavis Cain, 914-693-0529

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

For information about the trail and Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, call the **Historic Site Manager**, Brian Goodman, at 914-693-5259.

## Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct



*Croton Dam Spillway, from an old picture postcard. See p. 5.*

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  
Overseer's House  
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