



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter

No. 15, Summer 2003

New Aqueduct Management On Board

Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park is Under New Management. Michael Boyle, the eagerly awaited successor to Brian Goodman as Park Manager, was welcomed by the Friends with a long round of applause at their annual meeting on May 15th, just after his official appointment. He was introduced by Alix Schnee, Manager of Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Together they constitute the Aqueduct's enthusiastic and hearteningly strong new management team.

Quipping that clearly it takes two people to even attempt to fill Brian's shoes, Alix explained that Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park is now to be administratively affiliated with Rockefeller State Park Preserve. The two parks are physically linked, with an important segment of the Aqueduct that includes the Pocantico weir and 90-foot-high crossing of the Pocantico River forming the western edge of the Rockefeller Preserve. In the past the Aqueduct was affiliated with Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park. All three parks fall within State Parks' Taconic Region, based in Staatsburg and

headed by Regional Director Jayne McLaughlin.

Michael Boyle comes to the Aqueduct from Jones Beach State Park and, most recently, from Robert Moses State Park on Long Island, where he was Assistant Site Manager. He is a native of Wappinger Falls and was trained in forestry, a background he will have plenty of opportunity to apply on the trail's 26 wooded and tree-lined miles. He and his wife Ann and their 3-year-old son will be moving to the rivertowns area after the birth of their second child in November.

Alix Schnee brings years of experience to Rockefeller, where she became manager in February 2003, and to the Aqueduct. She was Historic Site Manager of Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site in Yonkers for nine years and then directed John Jay Homestead State Historic Site for two years. She has a doctorate in museum education and speaks with passion of bringing local historic resources like the Aqueduct into the classroom, a long-time goal of Brian Goodman and the Friends. Alix also has great personal credibility on Aqueduct matters, having lived next to



Alix Schnee and Michael Boyle



Nature writer James Capossela on left with Henry Atterbury, head of Ossining Heritage Area Visitor Center and Ossining Recreation, at the Friends' annual meeting. (Photos by B. Goodman)

the trail in Yonkers for 18 years.

The new managers stress that even in the best of times park staff cannot be everywhere on the 26 miles of trail. They encourage and rely on trail neighbors, users, and Aqueduct community officials to alert them to what is going on and for assistance and cooperation. The telephone number to reach park management remains the same: 914-693-5259.

The well-attended annual meeting of the Friends, held for the first time at the Rockefeller Park Visitor Center, was lively and gregarious thanks to president Mavis Cain's flair (and culinary talent). After a short business meeting that included the nomination and election of officers and board members - see p. 8 - brief updates were given on major improvements being planned on the east-west part of the trail in Yonkers thanks to State Senator Nicholas Spano and Assemblyman Michael Spano; on the Overseer's House project; on the map and guide of the Aqueduct in New York City; and on the campaign to reopen the High Bridge.

"Where Do I Go After Lyndhurst?" A New Answer Becomes Possible

Northbound Aqueduct walkers exiting the trail from Lyndhurst onto Rte. 9 (Broadway) in Tarrytown have long been frustrated by the sight of what at first looks like a continuation of the trail directly across Broadway, only to find it a wooded area with no trail in sight. The Friends' 1998 color map routes trail users onto Rte. 9 here in order to get across the Thruway. Now, with land east of Broadway and south of the Thruway having been put up for sale by the Unification

Church, there is a chance this uncleared, unused section of the Aqueduct across from Lyndhurst may spring back to life.

A development called Jardim Estates has been proposed which would add new homes to existing ones at Gracemere, a 19th century estate - part greensward, part woodlands - through which the Aqueduct passes east of Route 9. The proposal has brought attention to the possibility of creating a clear path on the short, now brush-covered section of Aqueduct immediately east/northeast of Route 9 and south of the road labeled "private street" in the inset on the Friends' map. Since the section north of the private road is already clear and well-maintained, this would give trail users an alternate to walking along heavily-trafficked Route 9. They could cross Route 9 from Lyndhurst, walk on the Aqueduct to Sheldon Ave., turn east on Sheldon to Meadow St., which passes under the Thruway, and then west on Route 119 to regain the Aqueduct.

At a May 27 meeting of the Tarrytown Planning Board, Friends board member John Flack spoke in support of clearing a trail on the Aqueduct across from Lyndhurst and of keeping the land on either side of the segment entirely green, a proposal raised by several current Gracemere residents. At the same meeting, new Aqueduct manager Michael Boyle expressed several of State Parks' concerns, including potential stormwater accumulation on the trail if new homes proposed upslope of the Aqueduct depend solely on an existing old Aqueduct culvert. The official review process is continuing.



View southward on the maintained part of the Aqueduct in Gracemere, south of the Thruway and Sheldon Ave., looking toward the uncleared part of the trail. (Photo by C. Fahn)

The Aqueduct Through Fifth-Grade Eyes

Noah Teitelbaum

Clean water is one of the easiest things to forget. It doesn't smell, it has no color and, for city kids like the ones in my fifth-grade class in Central Harlem, other than for a rain shower, it more or less shows up only



Fifth-graders from Community School 133, Manhattan, outside the Ossining Heritage Area Visitor Center in Ossining.

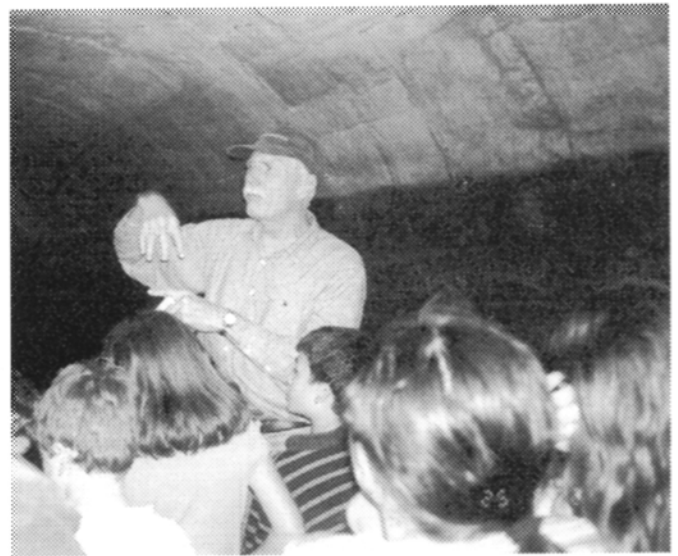
where people have decided to put it. In an attempt to bring my students into contact with the human-made and natural systems that shape our lives, this past winter my class 5-304 at Community School 133 has been studying water. Starting at the class sink, we worked our way down into the school's basement and out into the city's water main. Naturally, we needed to figure out how this water gets to our city!

With the help of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, we visited the historic aqueduct this late winter. It was a cool Saturday morning as a fellow teacher, a few chaperones, and I met my students, along with some from P.S. 125, in front of the school. Armed with cardboard clipboards, camera and tightly gripped candy bars, my kids excitedly followed me to the 125th St. Station. We boarded a Metro-North train bound for Ossining and were greeted warmly at the other end by Carl Grimm and later by Mavis Cain. The chorus of groans produced by the steep ascent up to the Aqueduct subsided once we reached the top, where the tour of our city's old aqueduct began.

Despite Carl's stories and explanations, the students could not really grasp the idea of the aqueduct until we descended into the weir house, where we were told about the city's pressing need for abundant fresh water. The children, true city slickers, were very concerned about what wildlife might be residing inside

the building. Even inside the aqueduct itself they found what they determined were the crystallized remains of a spider. Their fears increased as we made our way deeper up the aqueduct to where the ceiling turned from plaster to rock. Turning around again, they finally understood the need for the weir and started to imagine the enormity of the construction effort required to produce the aqueduct.

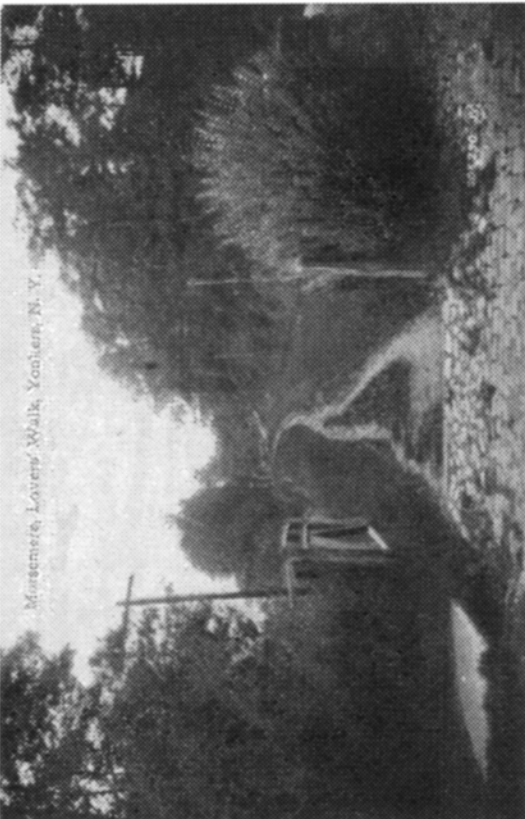
Outside again, we saw the various bridges supporting the aqueduct and reached the Ossining visitor center where, after lunch, we viewed the aqueduct exhibit. Iron shackles could not have kept the children from peering around to see the exhibit on Sing Sing, so the guides and I cleverly arranged this as the reward for completed worksheets. After a cheerful romp back down the hill, we boarded our train and the kids amazed us with their clear memories of facts, figures and ideas as we ran a quiz show about the aqueduct. Everyone received at least one cream pie reward. My class is in great debt to the Friends and I hope other classes get a chance to view *and touch* this crucial piece of our city's history.



Friends guide Carl Grimm inside the water tunnel with third-graders from PS 116, Manhattan.

From Mavis Cain: A month after the fifth-graders' memorable visit, a class from P.S. 116 in mid-Manhattan made the same excursion to the weir. These students were third-graders with an almost frightening knowledge of water systems, thanks to teacher Michele Yokell. This was one of our largest groups.

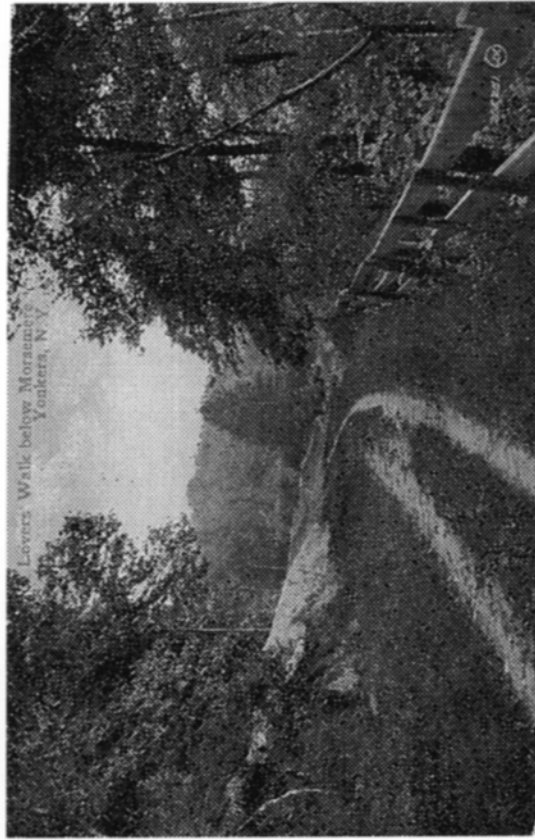
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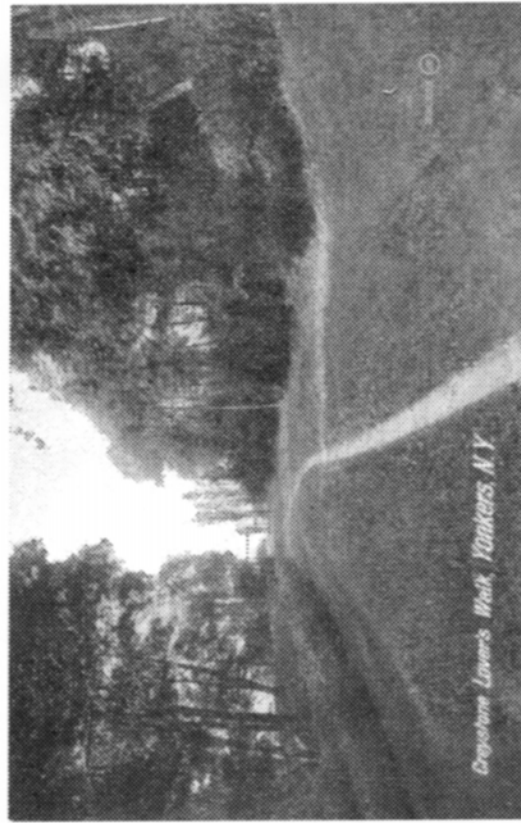
Morsemere, Lovers' Walk, Yonkers, NY. 1912. This view northward may have been taken from the point at which Robert Lane now crosses the Aqueduct. At the time, various estates shared this access down to Warburton. The fence and Belgian stone road are gone, but the gentle curve on the distant right is unchanged.



Tilden's Lovers' Walk, Yonkers, NY. 1910. View taken just beyond the Aqueduct waste weir, looking north. The rocks are unchanged, save for the graffiti. The Aqueduct at this point is parallel to and west of what was then NYS Governor Samuel J. Tilden's estate, which later became Untermyer Park.



Lovers' Walk Below Morsemere, Yonkers, NY. 1909. View taken from a point looking south from where one would make the "gentle curve" mentioned in the first scene. The rock is still there but not the rustic fence. "Morsemere" is the name of the section of Yonkers then abutting the Aqueduct.



Greystone Lover's Walk, Yonkers, NY. 1910. Greystone was the name of Gov. Tilden's estate. The view looks north beyond the previous view, titled "Tilden's Lovers' Walk."

High Bridge Campaign Gains Momentum

In a gesture of support for the campaign to reopen the High Bridge, three New York City commissioners made a joint visit to the bridge on May 5th for a tour and inspection. The event was marked by the following *Daily News* editorial, calling on the city to restore a vital link in the Old Croton Aqueduct greenway.



On the High Bridge, l. to r., NYC Commissioners Christopher Ward (Environmental Protection); Iris Weinshall (Transportation), holding the High Bridge poster; and Adrian Benepe (Parks & Recreation). (Photo courtesy of NYC Dept. of Env. Protection)

HIGH BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

FAR ABOVE THE HARLEM RIVER, HALFWAY BETWEEN THE BRONX AND MANHATTAN, THE VIEWS FROM THE HIGH BRIDGE ARE SPECTACULAR. IN FACT, THE 155-YEAR-OLD SPAN IS SO LOFTY THAT THE TRAFFIC COMING OFF THE NEARBY CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY IS SILENT, THE CARS AND TRUCKS LIKE TOYS.

THE HIGH BRIDGE ITSELF CARRIES NO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC. IT NEVER HAS. CONSTRUCTED IN 1848 AS THE DRAMATICALLY ARCHED CENTERPIECE OF THE OLD CROTON AQUEDUCT - NEW YORK'S FIRST PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM - THE BRIDGE WAS NOT ONLY A CONDUIT FOR WATER BUT A SIGHTSEEING DESTINATION AND A CONVENIENT SHORTCUT BETWEEN TWO BOROUGHES. NO LONGER. FOR DECADES IT HAS BEEN CLOSED TO ALL, ITS GATES WELDED SHUT, ONE OF NEW YORK'S LOST PLEASURES.

THANKFULLY, THE LOSS MAY BE TEMPORARY. A PRIVATE ENGINEERING TEAM WILL SOON COMPLETE A FULL STRUCTURAL EXAMINATION OF THE MASONRY AND STEEL BRIDGE. ITS REPORT, FUNDED BY THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, SHOULD DETAIL THE CONDITION OF THE STRUCTURE AND ESTIMATE WHAT IT

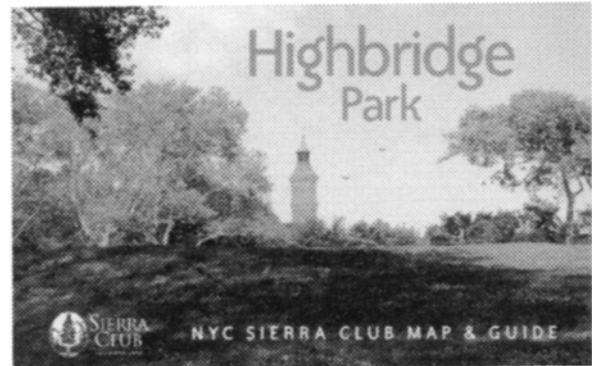
← **The Trail's Romantic Past.** *The Aqueduct trail is many things to many people, yet it was a surprise to learn from member Tony Peluso that in north Yonkers it was once considered a lovers' lane. We are indebted to Tony for the opportunity to reproduce these views from his collection of historic postcards.*

WOULD COST TO MAKE THIS ENGINEERING MARVEL SAFE ONCE AGAIN, FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BIKE RIDERS.

THIS WEEK, COMMISSIONERS CHRIS WARD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (WHICH OWNS THE OLD PIPES INSIDE THE STRUCTURE), ADRIAN BENEPE OF PARKS (WHICH OWNS THE EXTERIOR) AND IRIS WEINSHALL OF TRANSPORTATION TOURED THE HIGH BRIDGE FOR A PREVIEW OF WHAT, HOPEFULLY, EVERYONE WILL SOON BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE AGAIN.

CONNECTING THE HIGH BRIDGE - THE OLDEST BRIDGE LINK TO MANHATTAN - TO THE METROPOLITAN AREA'S EVER-GROWING NETWORK OF GREENWAYS, PEDESTRIAN TRAILS AND BIKE PATHS, AS WELL AS THE OLD CROTON AQUEDUCT STATE PARK, WOULD LURE VISITORS TO AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF CITY HISTORY. NEW YORK CAN - AND SHOULD - MAKE IT HAPPEN.

"Celebrate Highbridge!" To mark National Trails Day, June 7th, NYC Parks & Recreation, Partnership for Parks, and the Highbridge Coalition sponsored this community festival in Manhattan's Highbridge Park. Despite rain, 100+ volunteers from several agencies and organizations worked on improving the Old Croton Aqueduct trail in the park, while the Urban Park Rangers conducted tours of High Bridge Tower. To learn when the tower ("a cool place on a hot summer day") is open to the public, call 212-927-9568.



New Map of Highbridge Park

At the June 7th National Trails Day festival, Friends of Highbridge Park and the Sierra Club released their handsome and informative new color map and guide to the park, designed by Robert Romagnoli, who designed the Friends' map of the Old Croton Aqueduct in Westchester. The map project was led by Millie Seubert, president of Friends of Highbridge Park. Within the rugged, multi-level Manhattan park, which lies along the Harlem River between 155th and Dyckman streets, are important Old and New Croton Aqueduct structures and the southernmost mile of green, unpaved Aqueduct trail. For a free copy, write to Friends of Highbridge Park, 116 Pinehurst Ave. #M-32, New York, NY 10033, or highbridge@tgc.org.

Walking Between the Trail and Croton Station

Daniel Chazin

A special feature of the Old Croton Aqueduct is that, for most of its route, it parallels the Hudson Line of the Metro-North Railroad, which offers frequent service daily. Thus, one can walk along the Aqueduct and return to the starting point by train, without retracing one's steps. While it is possible to hike the Aqueduct for any distance between Yonkers and Ossining and return by train, the Aqueduct route veers away from the Hudson Line north of Ossining, where it begins to follow the Croton River. Yet this portion of the Aqueduct route is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful sections of the entire 26-mile trail.

A perusal of a trail map prepared by the Village of Croton-on-Hudson indicates the availability of an option that permits one to hike this magnificent section of the Aqueduct and then reach the Croton-Harmon railroad station by a pleasant route through village parkland and quiet residential streets. At either the second or third intersection of the Aqueduct with Quaker Bridge Road turn left (if you're heading north) and proceed west (downhill) to Quaker Bridge. Turn left and cross this picturesque bridge over the Croton River. About 50 feet beyond the west end of the bridge, you'll see an unmarked but clearly defined, narrow footpath that leads sharply left. Follow this footpath as it climbs the hill, heading south, parallel to the river.

In a few minutes, you'll reach a wide dirt road at the top of the hill. This is the Croton River Gorge trail, maintained by the Village of Croton. Turn left and follow this road, which runs along the Croton River Gorge. In about 10 minutes, you'll pass a dam to the left and reach Silver Lake Park, with a swimming area along the river. Signs indicate that the park is for residents only, but the intent is only to limit use of the swimming and parking areas provided for village residents. The village welcomes hikers who pass through this park as part of a longer walk.

After walking through the parking area, continue

along Truesdale Drive, a pleasant residential street. At first, the Croton River Gorge is visible through the trees to the left, but the road soon moves slightly inland. Follow Truesdale Drive for about a mile to its end at a

traffic circle, then bear left and continue along Benedict Boulevard for several blocks. Turn left onto South Riverside Ave. for one block, then turn right at the Exxon station, following signs to the Croton-Harmon railroad station. Continue past the Route 9 overpass and make the second left, which leads to the station, where southbound Metro-North trains will return you to your starting point (for schedules, call 1-800-METRO-INFO). Allow about 45-60 minutes from Quaker Bridge.



Quaker Bridge, listed on the Westchester Inventory and National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by S. Fahn)

Daniel Chazin of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference writes "Hike of the Week" for the Bergen Record.

Publications

Trailways, Footpaths and Parks: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Natural and Cultural History, Hastings-on-Hudson . . . 2nd ed. Fred H. Hubbard, Ph.D. 2003, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. Spiral-bound, 85 pp. plus color photos. \$25.95. Order from Good Yarns, Hastings.

The new edition of this precise, clearly written guide now includes (pp. 34-39) the entire two miles of the Aqueduct in Hastings. The author, who is the village naturalist, describes the riches of plant life along the Aqueduct in a way that tempts you to get out and take a look for yourself, guidebook in hand. Enlivening the text are captivating bits of local history and some pithy author commentary. The Aqueduct is recognized throughout the guide as the natural "backbone" to Hastings' trails, footpaths, and parks. Its connections with these local walkways are given in the text and listed separately in an appendix (p. 73). The work of several trail organizations is described, including Friends of the Aqueduct.

Aqueduct Through Fifth-Grade Eyes (cont'd.)

Visual proof that these kids learned the story of the aqueduct very well came in the mail — a long "letter," 26 x 33 inches. Each child had written his or her best memory of the visit—each in a different color. Ryan's comment: "I learned that they dammed up the aqueduct by cranking a wheel." Sara said, "I never knew that the water in the aqueduct came right up to our heads." Tyler commiserated: "It must have been hard on John Jervis to lose 3 men - and a dam!" This beautiful letter has been mounted for display at rivertowns village fairs, eventually to hang in the Overseer's House.

Our next visitors were Special Ed students from Claremont School in Ossining with their teacher, Anna Ceretti. Brian Goodman was the tour leader, pointing out the three dormant bats hanging from the top of the tunnel as well as the roots that had penetrated the tunnel from a tree 30 feet above. Afterwards, in the visitor center, the boys all wanted to have their pictures taken in the reconstructed early Sing Sing jail cells on display.



Third-grade visitors from P.S. 116, Manhattan.

The Friends are happy to arrange tours for school classes. One of the fifth-graders from Noah Teitelbaum's class said, "this is the best field trip we've ever had."

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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.

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Please let us know if you would like to volunteer.

Aqueduct News / In Brief

In its July issue "Best of Westchester" feature, *Westchester Magazine* chose the Aqueduct as the **best walking path in the county**, calling it a "picturesque path [that] runs through the river towns and features great distracting views to burn calories by" - we agree! . . . For a **virtual walking tour of the Aqueduct in New York City**, created virtually overnight in time for National Trails Day by the the web whizzes at NYC Parks & Recreation, log on to nycgovparks.org, then click on Your Park, then Flagships and Virtual Tours. The text opens: "One of New York City's best-kept secrets! Follow this 160-year-old route and keep a sharp eye out for the history at your feet." . . . **Thanks are owed to Hastings' Temple Beth Shalom for including a cleanup of the Aqueduct** ("our local greenway") in its community service day on Sunday, June 8th. The energetic group that turned out first heard a talk about the Aqueduct at trail headquarters in Dobbs Ferry. . . . Watch for a **Discovery Channel program due to air in October called "We Built This City: New York."** It is expected to include a segment on the Aqueduct, including original footage recently filmed on the High Bridge. . . . Reminder: The **sixth annual day-after-Thanksgiving Turkey Walk** on the Aqueduct will take place on Friday, Nov. 28th. Call Jocko Lloyd, 914-693-5094, for details.

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



"North of Odell Ave., north Yonkers.. Broadway and the Hastings trolley and the R.R. are below. Old Croton Aqueduct." (Sketch by Robert L. Dickinson from the New York Walk Book, 2nd ed., 1934, New York, Dodd, Mead & Co.)

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 Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109; telephone 914-693-4117.

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