



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter

No. 42, Fall 2012

The Croton Aqueduct Completion Medal

Dave Baldwin

Charles King's 1843 volume "A Memoir of the Construction, Cost, and Capacity of the Croton Aqueduct" chronicles the construction of the greatest engineering project this nation had ever seen, and describes the civic celebration in New York City on October 14, 1842, said to have been the largest celebration in the City's history. The final paragraph reads: *As a record of this celebration, and the great event it*

commemorated, the Committee of the Common Council caused a silver medal to be struck of the engraving on which a facsimile is presented on the following page, followed by a simple drawing of the medal.

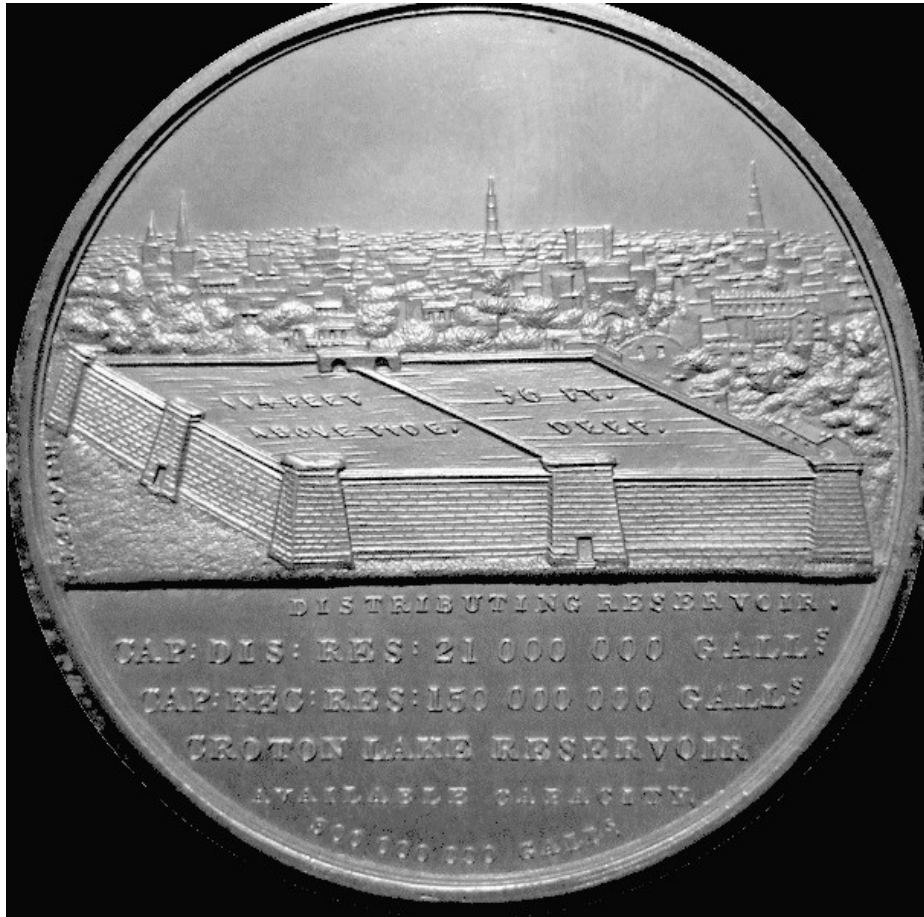
This medal was the work of well-known New York engraver Robert Lovett Sr. Born on March 19, 1796, one of seven children of John and Jane Lovett, he grew up in a quiet neighborhood in New York in an area now covered by the western end of the Brooklyn Bridge. He served a short time in the military during the War of 1812 but by 1813 was serving an apprenticeship in the engraving shop of master stone seal engraver Thomas Brown. He married Anna Doubleday in 1814 and by 1816 had moved to Philadelphia and set up his own engraving business specializing in dies and seals. Locating any seals of his is difficult as they would not have been signed but correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Cooper in 1819 identifies Robert Sr. as the creator of the official seal for the University of Virginia.

By 1824 he was back in New York City and had set up shop at 249 Broadway. His shop location moved several times over the years but he stayed in New York City until his death on December 31, 1874, just six hours after the passing of his wife of 60 years.

Robert Lovett Sr's body of work is not large but he is well known in the numismatic community for the quality of his engraving and the medal he produced to celebrate the completion of the Croton Aqueduct is a reflection of this. On one face of this 51mm medal is a depiction of the Murray Hill



Medal made by Robert Lovett to celebrate the completion of the Croton Aqueduct.



Second face of the Croton Aqueduct medal depicting the Distributing Reservoir

Distribution Reservoir with a finely detailed cityscape in the background. Below the reservoir is a listing of the capacities for the system. The opposite face of this medal shows a cross-section of part of the Aqueduct with dimensions and capacities listed as well as the completion date and the date water was introduced. It is known that these were produced in silver and engraved for presentation to the 17 aldermen at the time and other dignitaries, although the exact number produced, and who these 'dignitaries' were, is not known. They were also struck in bronze and white metal, probably contemporary with the silver examples, but it is not known whether they were produced for the Committee also or by Robert Sr. for his own purposes.

Examples in any metal are very scarce today and rarely come up for sale. The white metal pieces are rather soft and tend to have damage; many pieces are holed and were probably worn around the neck. Bronze pieces are struck on thicker planchets and most are well preserved. The John J. Ford Jr. Collection, probably the greatest collection of American medals ever seen, contained an absolutely flawless bronze piece but no silver example! The only two silver ones I have seen are in my collection and I have a record of a silver example engraved to "R.F. Carmane / Ald. 12th Ward" selling

in 1991. Many of these engraved medals stay with the family and so are not known to the collecting community. Unfortunately, many of them are also melted down during hard times and so may be lost.

The first engraved silver medal I was able to add to my collection was awarded to "Gen. Hopkins / Gd Marshall" and included an original daguerreotype in its original frame. The second piece I obtained was engraved to "Geo. P. Morris / Author of Croton Ode." George Pope Morris (1802–1864) was an editor, poet, and songwriter; he is probably best known for his poem "Woodman, Spare That Tree." His poem "The Croton Ode" was read at the celebration and subsequently published in a collection of his poems entitled "The Deserted Bride and Other Poems." George P. Morris was later honored with a medal from the Baltimore Female College that was created by Robert Lovett, Jr. of Philadelphia, the son of the creator of his silver Croton Medal! This medal is still in existence in a collection in Virginia.

Other works of Robert Lovett Sr. include a series of medals for the Washington Temperance Society, a medal commissioned by Jesse D. Elliot to honor his friend James Fenimore Cooper (possibly the only medal with his likeness), several political pieces and storecards in the Hard Times series, and several varieties of medals for the American Institute.

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The Old Croton Aqueduct in History and Culture

Ed Brody

VIII. The Aqueduct Becomes a Public Trail (1965-1989)

This continues the story from the Summer 2012 newsletter (#41) covering the period 1907- 1965. New York City became an international commercial center; with its expansion Westchester became a New York City suburb. Major Aqueduct structures became impediments to growth and were replaced by underground pipes. The New Croton Aqueduct and expanded Croton Reservoir system no longer provided enough water for the city so the Catskill and Delaware systems were gradually added. When they were completed the Old Croton Aqueduct (OCA) was deemed inefficient to operate and the head gates were closed.

Alternate Life as a Trail

Although officially only for engineers and water police the path atop the Aqueduct became an unofficial walking trail early in its history. In the 1890s cyclists using the new mass-produced bicycles were complaining about cows and fences on the trail.¹ The first edition of the *New York Walk Book*, published in 1923 by the American Geographical Society, recognized the trail as an attraction: "For maximum reward with minimum exertion no walking hereabouts compares with this peaceful parkway."²

In 1966 the Hudson River Valley Commission recommended it as ideal for walkers. But there were legal complications. The land acquisition act of 1834 called for "reversion" to the original owners if their land was not used to bring water to the city. After legal maneuvering the 26-mile Westchester segment was acquired in 1968 by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) as the Old Croton Trailway State Park. (The Aqueduct in NYC and the Croton Reservoir still belong to the city.)³

Later that year a *New York Times* reporter tried to traverse the trail with Dr William Amols of Irvington, founder of the new Croton Aqueduct Association, but they were hampered by poor maintenance, a lack of trail markers and vegetation so thick that detours were necessary. There were intrusions onto the trail. Tarrytown had constructed a school that extended across trail. Some residents

whose homes abutted the trail had extended their backyards onto it. Municipalities used it for parking. The travelers had to abandon their outing before reaching their destination. Yet despite these problems, there were sections with superb views.⁴

State Parks had no experience with a park that was 26 miles long but only 66 feet wide, passed through 12 communities and had numerous access points. The Aqueduct was treated as an adjunct of Mohansic (now FDR) State Park in Yorktown, although nowhere near this park, and had to share its staff.

Protecting the Aqueduct

Meanwhile the historic preservation movement was gaining strength, especially after New York City's Pennsylvania Railroad Station was demolished in 1963. By 1965, three years before the state acquisition, NYC passed a Landmarks law. The High Bridge Tower was designated a landmark two years later; the High Bridge itself became a city landmark in 1970. The OCA in Westchester received recognition, being added to the NYS Register and the National Register in 1974. But facts on the ground did not match formal recognition. The tunnel was used to house telephone and power cables. A pressurized sewer line was



*High Pumping Station, Jerome Park Reservoir
(Jerome Park Conservancy Preservation Report)*

placed in the tube in Tarrytown. And there was limited trail care until 1974 when State Parks started a maintenance program.

In 1974 the trail faced a major threat. Westchester County wanted to create a bikeway system that would include the OCA. State Parks proposed paving the trail with blacktop eight feet



Cyclists struggling on the Aqueduct, 1968⁴

wide, using concrete barriers to keep cars off. Worried that the trail would lose its bucolic character, a Croton Aqueduct Committee was formed which joined with other organizations to write to officials and newspapers.

Fortunately money was not available to carry out the bikeway plan. But the letter-writing campaign led to recognition of the trail by preservationists and lawmakers. In 1976 the NYS Legislature designated a Croton Aqueduct Scenic & Historic Corridor from the Croton Reservoir to the High Bridge Tower, calling it “a natural pathway between communities” to be preserved and protected.⁵ Another threat arose in 1977 when Ossining proposed paving a portion of the trail as part of an urban renewal project. This was prevented by legislation.

The early 1980s saw more recognition. In 1981 the High Pumping Station – part of the Jerome Park Reservoir complex – became a NYC Landmark as did the 135th St gatehouse; both became National Register sites two years later. In 1982 the Ossining Urban Cultural Park (now Ossining Heritage Area) opened as part of a statewide system. It included the weir and double arch bridge. Plans for an office park access road along the trail in Ossining were defeated in 1984.

Volunteers Step In

But state budgets were cut so trail maintenance decreased. In the summer of 1986 an informal Committee for a Safe Aqueduct was created in Croton to improve conditions on the northern 2.5 mile segment of the trail. State Parks welcomed this committee since the park’s crew was now down to three full-time staff for the entire trail. Again, a letter-writing campaign brought about some improvement. The same year saw the publication of a Walker’s Guide to the OCA – an illustrated 18-page booklet funded by the Littauer Foundation and produced by State Parks.

In 1987 things started to happen. Ossining, needing more water, decided to clean a segment of the OCA tunnel that was

www.aqueduct.org

reopened the following year to supply the town. An informal Old Croton Aqueduct Committee (OCAC) was formed with state involvement to coordinate the activities of the trail communities to stimulate public awareness, stop crime and dumping, and build vehicle barriers. In January 1989 it changed its status to a formal committee for the “education, protection and promotion” of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail.

This came none too soon as further NYS budget cuts had reduced staff to one maintenance worker, with occasional workers from FDR State Park “when we can spare them.” Only emergency care and grass cutting twice a year were provided. As a result, newspaper articles noted and the state agreed, the OCA was again overgrown, fallen trees blocked the trail, walls had crumbled, and motorcycles and dirt bikes were chewing up the terrain; there were robberies, even a rape and a murder.⁶

Once again, a letter-writing campaign prompted newspaper articles and editorials. The Littauer Foundation funded a report on the value of the Aqueduct.⁷ It estimated 817,000 annual trail users, noted the potential development of the Dobbs Ferry Overseer’s (now Keeper’s) House and suggested a 150th Aqueduct Anniversary celebration in 1992. State Parks tried to get funding from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act to restore the Overseer’s House but the application was denied.

During the summer of 1989 the OCAC worked with the press, local officials and State Parks to promote awareness of the extraordinary value of the trail. It organized hikes, cleanups, a legislators’ forum, involvement with the legislature’s Greenway Council, and a plan to raise money for vehicle barriers along the trail. This culminated in the first Aqueduct Awareness Weekend celebrated along the entire trail for three days, October 13-15, 1989. At the end of that year the committee decided to become a non-profit corporation — the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

This article is largely based on newspaper articles and archival material that may not be complete. Please let us know if you have additional information.

Footnotes

1. See “An Aqueduct Wheelway” *NY Times* Nov 20, 1898 re bicycle use. The picture on the front of our newsletter showing walkers is from a mid-19th century magazine.
2. See William Wing, “Hudson Valley Project – 32-Mile Scenic Parkway for Walkers,” *NY Herald Tribune* Feb 6, 1966 for the Walk Book quote.
3. *Ibid*, for discussion of the legal issues.
4. See David Bird, “A 32-mile Long Swath of Green from the Country to the City,” *NY Times* Oct 27, 1968. Information about the Croton Aqueduct Association is welcome.
5. Newsletter 37 (Winter 2011) recounts the paving story.
6. See Editorial, “New York must do its share of Croton Aqueduct upkeep,” *Gannett Westchester* Oct 14, 1989 and Tessa Melvin, “Volunteers Step In As State Support of Aqueduct Drops,” *NY Times* Oct 22, 1989.
7. “A Report on Public/Private Participation Opportunities for the Old Croton Trailways State Park” to The Natural Heritage Trust (July 26, 1989, Pierpont Assoc.)



High School student helpers celebrating the completion of the Walnut Street Community Garden, Yonkers

Broccoli on the OCA!

Anne Megaro

Five hundred feet off Yonkers Avenue on Walnut Street in Yonkers is a new community garden. And, yes, it's part of the Old Croton Aqueduct (OCA)! At first sight, it doesn't look like part of the trail, just like another vacant lot, enclosed by a chain link fence that looks as if it belongs to the adjacent buildings.

For years, it was filled with burdock and litter and it drove Danny Matera nuts. Mr. Matera is a native Yonkers resident. Living next to the lot, he sees it constantly. His dream: a community garden. Trouble was, he didn't know any gardeners until he met a few at Groundwork Hudson Valley.

Groundwork is a not-for-profit in Yonkers that works with neighborhoods to plant trees, clear vacant lots, make community gardens, offer a mini Farmers' Market and operate the Science Barge, a floating urban farm on the Hudson. Groundwork has worked with NY State on several cleanups on the OCA and has played a major part in creating the newly daylighted Saw Mill River park in Yonkers.

Once Mr. Matera and Groundwork joined forces, things moved quickly. The State gave Danny a renewable permit for the lot. Groundwork's Green Team— 26 high school teens employed each summer to create environmental improvements—quickly built 12 raised beds and filled them with compost. We brought in two water barrels and got permission from the City of Yonkers to tap into the nearby hydrant. Mr. Matera designed a large colorful sign and voilà! — a thriving garden bursting with broccoli instead of burdock.

High Bridge Restoration Set to Begin

At last! The imminent start of work to restore and reopen the High Bridge marks a turning point in the life of this storied crossing, which turns 165 years old next year – New York City's oldest bridge. A major construction firm, Schiavone Construction Co., is the selected contractor; the city's Dept. of Parks & Recreation and Dept. of Design and Construction are administering the project.

The High Bridge was built to carry Croton water from the mainland across the Harlem River to Manhattan, in pipes still beneath its deck; after its 1848 opening it quickly became a renowned and hugely popular tourist destination as well. Closed since 1970, its reopening has long been dreamed of and worked for, a campaign in which the Friends have played an active role.

Every element of the bridge – all the masonry, the steel arch down to its rivets, the brickwork on the deck, the railing, lights, the tie rods in the pipe chamber, and much more – will be addressed, and new elements added for improved safety and access. Hudson Line commuters, Major Deegan Expressway drivers, Circle Line

tourists – keep your eyes peeled as you pass the bridge: it will soon be alive with activity. Future newsletters will report details of the work and of a celebratory ground-breaking ceremony now being planned. –C. Fahn



Air view of the High Bridge, 1978, viewed from the Bronx, across Harlem River (foreground) and Manhattan to the Hudson River. High Bridge Tower and Highbridge Pool, on the site of the former Highbridge Reservoir, are at upper right. (Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress, photo by Jack Boucher)

Friends See Remains of Distributing Reservoir at New York Public Library

Thomas Tarnowsky

As many readers are aware, the site now occupied by the New York Public Library's main building on 42nd Street and 5th Avenue was once the location of the Distributing Reservoir of the Old Croton Aqueduct. With the help of the NYPL's staff, the Friends have organized two tours so far this year to see the Library's collection of old documents relating to the reservoir and to view its remains which are embedded in the Library's foundations. More visits are being planned.



Croton Water Reservoir/A. Fay (1850). New York Public Library

When the aboveground, fortress-like reservoir was completed in 1842 it was located more than a mile north of the built-up street grid on an elevated site known as Murray Hill, along a muddy, unleveled stretch of what would later become the elegant precincts of 5th Avenue. Having outlived its usefulness in only slightly more than 50 years, it was demolished in 1900 to make way for the NYPL.

Leading the FOCA tours were the head NYPL docent, Margaret Kable, and archivist, Thomas Lannon, who delved into the Library's collections for us and added immensely to our enjoyment of the tour and our understanding of the environment in which the building of the reservoir and later, the library, took place. Lannon displayed rare photos, maps, and other records that helped us visualize the long lost artifacts and scenery of mid-19th century Manhattan. In addition, we were able to descend into the basement of the library building to see for ourselves a section of its foundation. As stated in a newspaper of the time, "Stones from the walls of the old reservoir compose a large part of the foundations."¹

Any New Yorker would recognize the stones of ancient Manhattan bedrock, sparkling with specks of mica on which so much of New York is built.

The library also displayed an original copy of a final bill from the contractor who built the reservoir for the then extravagant sum of \$443,551.83.

To help understand the reservoir in the context of mid-19th century New York, I brought along a folder of art and

photographs from my own research along with accounts of the building by former NYC Mayor Philip Hone and from the diary of a 10- year old girl, both members of the more privileged class of New Yorkers. Their observations bring to life the fast growing sprawl of the city and its ambitious and proud inhabitants:

Philip Hone "...I went out to the reservoir on Murray Hill, a short drive from the city. I

found Mr. Thompson Price, the contractor, who showed and explained everything about the gigantic work. It is divided into two equal compartments, which, together, will contain 19 million gallons. The walls are of granite, of prodigious thickness, finely wrought on the exterior, and affording a pleasant promenade on the top. I doubt whether there is a similar work in Europe of equal extent and magnificence with the Croton Aqueduct, its dams, bridges, tunnels and reservoirs."²

The following two excerpts from the little girl's diary were written in 1849-50:

"... 5th Avenue is very muddy above 18th street, and there are no blocks of houses as there are downtown, but only two or three on a block. Last Sunday we had a picnic on the grounds of Mr. Waddell's country seat way up 5th Ave., and it was so muddy I spoiled my new light cloth gaiter boots."³

"... My mother says when she was young everybody drank the Manhattan water. Everybody had a cistern for rain water for washing, in the back-yards. And when she lived in Maiden Lane, the servants had to go up to the corner of Broadway and get drinking water from the pump there. My mother says the Manhattan water was brackish and not very pleasant to drink."⁴

Footnotes

1. The Appeal newspaper, Saint Paul, Minn. Aug 10, 1907.
2. The Diary of Philip Hone, entry for Oct. 28, 1841.
3. Diary of a Little Girl in Old New York, By Catherine Elizabeth Havens; 2nd edition. Henry Collins Brown, New York, 1920
4. Ibid.

Walks and More

October 27, Saturday – Old Croton Weir Tour, Crawbuckie Preserve, Croton Dam Hike – Co-Sponsored by the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and the Westchester Trails Association. Hike will be 3 or 7 easy miles. The morning features a short film about the Old Croton Aqueduct and a walk on the Double Arch Bridge to the OCA Weir in Ossining, where we will descend into the original 1842 brick water tunnel to learn its history. After the tour, we head north to the Crawbuckie Nature Preserve to explore its new trails and enjoy lunch overlooking the Hudson. Those wishing a 3-mile hike can return to the starting point after lunch. Those doing the full 7 miles will continue north on the Aqueduct to the Croton Dam. Co-leaders: Herb Hochberg, 914-723-6566, hhochsberg@hotmail.com and Sara Kelsey, 646-303-1448, skelsey@aqueduct.org. People who are not going to the Dam should meet Sara at 9:45 am at the Caputo Community Center, 95 Broadway, Ossining, just west of the Route 9/133 junction. Those doing the 7 mile hike, meet Herb at 8:15 am at North White Plains train station, or 9:00 am in the main parking lot at Croton Gorge Park, just off Route 129 in Croton-on-Hudson. We will leave most of the cars there, and shuttle back to the Caputo Center.

November 3, Saturday – Vine Lopping and Invasive Plant Removal on the Croton Dam Section of the Aqueduct—Meet at the top of the Dam (east side, furthest from the falls). 9.30 am-1.30 pm. Bring pruning shears and gloves or use tools on site. Register in advance at crotonnews.com/trailday. Check website on the day of event for last-minute updates.

November 4, Sunday – On and Off the Aqueduct in Sleepy Hollow. See the highest embankment on the Aqueduct and visit the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery monument to the regiment that guarded the water supply in World War I. This is a loop walk of about 3-1/2 to 4 miles. Meet at 11 am at the north end of the Sleepy Hollow High School parking lot at Bedford Road. (Route 448), a short distance east (uphill) from Broadway (Route 9). Information: 914-478-3961 or czfahn@gmail.com.

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

Aquefest 2012



*Kids made music with Bash The Trash in Hastings.
Photo by E. Zazzera.*



Pony rides were a favorite in Dobbs Ferry. Photo by E. Cain.



Arm of the Sea Theater enthralled more than 100 kids and adults on the trail behind the Keeper's House. Photo by E. Cain.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct
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Newsletter: Ruth Gastel, *Editor*. News items, reminiscences, and comments welcome: 914-479-1414 or ruthg@iii.org or by mail c/o the Friends.

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Newsletter No. 42 Fall 2012



Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano, a long time supporter of the OCA, kicks off the first Aquefest run. Photo by E. Zazzera.

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, www.aqueduct.org.

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