

GreenSpace

For members, supporters, and friends of Parks & Trails New York

Winter 2016-2017



You Bring the History of the Old Croton Aqueduct to Life for Millions of Visitors

Each year, more than a million people visit the Old Croton Aqueduct to walk part of the 26-mile trail running through this unique linear park in the Hudson Valley. Visitors marvel at the scenic path which runs along the top of an underground aqueduct, winding through many communities and passing by numerous historic sites and preserves. But until recently, many visitors didn't even realize that the trail is part of a State Park, let alone understand the enormous historical significance of the aqueduct under their feet.

A transformative tale from our past waiting to be told

During the 1830s New York City suffered from a lack of fresh water to combat rising disease and fight the fires that often consumed parts of the city. A bold plan was hatched to build a 41-mile aqueduct and dam that would direct water from the Croton River to above-ground reservoirs located at the present sites of the New York Public Library and the Great Lawn of Central Park. In five years, thousands of workers, many of whom were Irish immigrants, completed this feat of masonry and brought up to 100 million gallons of fresh water to city residents daily.

Eventually, a skyrocketing population required construction of the New Croton Aqueduct, but the original continued to provide water to New York City until 1965. Its masonry structures are the foundation of what is now one of the world's largest municipal water systems, which stretches over 100 miles into central New York State and transports water to over 8 million city dwellers daily.

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"The grant we received from PTNY gave us a giant step forward in opening the new Visitor and Education rooms to the surprisingly worldwide group of visitors who appear every weekend. We love showing off our new displays, taking visitors through the story of how we got to this stage as well as explaining the facts of the engineering miracle that is the Aqueduct. Our guest book is overflowing with enthusiastic comments in a variety of languages. Hurrah for the grant! It got us going!"

— Mavis Cain, President,
Friend of the Old Croton Aqueduct



Parks & Trails New York helped Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct create an educational exhibit for the newly restored Keeper's House with a grant from the Park & Trail Partnership Program.

Your voice, your time, your financial support— your contributions make so much possible.

Cover Story continued

In 1983, a group of motivated citizen-volunteers formed the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and dedicated themselves to restoring the Keeper's House, which had fallen into ruin. Located in Dobbs Ferry at the mid-point of the 26-mile trail, this beautiful house is the last remaining of six that were originally constructed to house maintenance supervisors. The Friends envisioned it as the perfect visitors' center and focal point for the State Park. After many years and Herculean efforts, this dedicated Friends group succeeded in raising \$1.2 million and renovating this marvelous piece of history.

Our Park and Trail Partnership Program empowers Friends groups to make a big difference

The Friends' vision for the Keeper's House included an educational exhibit that would bring the history of this world-renowned water supply system and its role in the economic growth of New York City to life. They applied to the Park and Trail Partnership Program with plans for seven exhibits and were one of 20 friends organizations to be awarded a grant in March, 2016. Having a dynamic indoor visitor's center for the Old Croton Aqueduct State Park is helping the Friends group promote the park year-round, engage with local and city schools, and attract members and volunteers to support their work.

Thanks to your support, PTNY was successful in advocating for a second round of funding for the Park and Trail Partnership Program. The state approved another \$500,000 for the program through the Environmental Protection Fund in the 2016-2017 budget. Laura DiBetta, PTNY's Director of Parks Program and Government Relations, said "We've long believed in the grassroots power of park Friends groups to accomplish great things and have provided valuable technical assistance and small grants to support them. Now, with an even more significant source of funding available, we are excited to really see them take off and make improvements to parks that will benefit millions of visitors across the state."

What will your legacy be?

It's never too early to begin thinking about your legacy. As someone who appreciates nature and green space, we invite you to share your passion for New York's majestic parks and beautiful trails by making a planned gift to Parks & Trails New York and ensuring that your favorite parks and trails will be protected for generations to come.

To learn more about becoming a member of the Legacy Society of Parks & Trails New York, please contact Meegan Finnegan, Director of Development, at mfinnegan@ptny.org or 518-434-1583.



"I joined Parks and Trails New York because I care about these important public spaces. They are not receiving the protection that they need. I am the Coordinator of the New York Geographic Alliance, and we know that parks showcase the best that New York geography has to offer. Mr. Letchworth has long been a hero of mine, since he saved the beautiful falls and gorge from industrial degradation."

— Tim McDonnell, winner of a night at The Glen Iris Inn at Letchworth State Park during PTNY's spring membership drive

Save the dates!

March 13 — Park Advocacy Day

April 22-23 — Canal Clean Sweep

May 6 — 6th Annual I Love My Park Day!

July 9-16 — 19th Annual Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour

Ways to Support New York's Parks and Trails

- Become a member of Parks & Trails New York or make a donation online, by phone, or mail
- Double your donation by sending us your employer's matching gift form
- Remember Parks & Trails New York in your will
- Give at the office via EarthShare New York
- Get involved - join us on I Love My Park Day, Canal Clean Sweep, and Park and Trail Advocacy Days

Visit www.ptny.org to learn more