

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

No. 55, Winter 2017-18

Photo by Fred Charles

The Aqueduct at 175: A Rousing Toast

Hubert B. Herring

What a party! It may have lacked the cannons and five-mile parade in Manhattan on October 14, 1842, that celebrated the triumphant July 4th maiden journey of the first Croton water. But the gala celebration at the Keeper's House in Dobbs Ferry on October 8, marking the Aqueduct's 175th birthday, proved a resounding, joyous echo of that historic occasion.

It was an unseasonably muggy day, but the threatened rain held off, and nearly 200 people showed up to mark the event, including a who's who of local politicians. MaryJane Shimsky of Hastings, a Westchester legislator, was there. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, leader of the State Senate Democrats, added gravitas to the occasion by reading a lengthy proclamation, laden with obligatory "whereases" and "therefores," declaring the day Old Croton Aqueduct Day. Tom Abinanti, Greenburgh assemblyman, led a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" to the Aqueduct, followed by a sharing of a giant cake topped with a Croton Water seal in rich chocolate. Paul Feiner, Greenburgh Town Supervisor, came by on his bike, his first visit to the Keeper's House.

The event was awash in Friends' board members and volunteers, with Joanna Riesman and Mavis Cain spearheading the effort. And it was packed with memo-

rable moments, starting early on when the Iona College bagpipers appeared, stopping two Spandex-clad bikers in their tracks. Then Jim Beirne, a part-time actor and regular Keeper's House volunteer, gave an inspirational recitation of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Lincoln's connection to the Aqueduct was unclear, but no matter: the crowd was mesmerized by Jim's booming delivery.

A highlight of the day was a performance of the "Croton Ode" by seven singers from the Croton Chorale and the 1601 Madrigal Group at the Bennett Conservatory in Croton, an appearance organized by Cornelia Cotton. The piece was first performed at the 1842 festivities. "Gushing from this living fountain/Music pours a falling strain," the flowery, gushing ode begins, and a good many stanzas later (it's awfully long; the singers spared us most of it) ends with

"When Posterity shall mingle/Like the gathered waters here."

On this commemorative day, Posterity most definitely mingled.

And that was just the beginning of the joyous music. Next came Jim Keyes, a top-hatted troubador equipped with mandolin, dulcimer, and 18th-century guitar, who led the crowd in the Battle Hymn of the Republic. This was soon followed,

(cont. on page 2)



The Aqueduct at 175 *(cont. from page 1)*

around the side of the house, by spirited blue-grass music from Dan O'Dea and Eagle Ridge.

The house was encircled by activity. Out back, supervised by a local group called ArchForKids, with its managing director, Kathryn Slocum, helping out, children constructed colorful bridges and arches out of paper, cardboard, Chinese take-out containers, and glue. Inside the Keeper's House, photos of the restoration had been replaced by a colorful new exhibit of photos by Fred Charles, who was there speaking about the early days of saving the Aqueduct, a quarter-century ago, when, he recalled, cars often drove on the litter-strewn path.

Adding more gravity to the event, Bob Kornfeld reminded the crowd about the devastating fires and epi-

demics that plagued the city before Croton water arrived. And Adam Bosch, of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, spoke forcefully about the importance of water-supply infrastructure, now and forever.

On a more playful note, Tom Tarnowsky – like Bob Kornfeld a walking encyclopedia of Aqueduct lore – rigged up a tube and funnel and bucket of water to demonstrate the workings of an inverted siphon, essential to get water across the Harlem River at the High Bridge, and to get that same water across the Manhattan Valley.

Thirsty visitors could toast the event with a “Croton cocktail,” otherwise known as lemonade. Out of real glasses and cups, of course. Elisa Zazzera, devoted recycler and composter, saw to that.



Photos by Adriana Cubis

Check our online calendar for walks, tours, and Ossining weir visits led by the Friends, as well as other Aqueduct-related events. Visit **aqueduct.org/calendar**.

William and Jacqueline Amols and the Campaign to Stop a Parking Lot on the Aqueduct

Charlotte Fahn



William Amols (photo: J. Amols) and Jacqueline Amols (photo: AllOtsego.com.)

The names William and Jacqueline Taliaferro Amols are not well known today among Aqueduct supporters in the Rivertowns, but they deserve to be. This abbreviated account is occasioned by the death of Jacqueline in August. Bill Amols, a physician, died in 2004. Dr. Amols was a faculty member and researcher in the Neurology Department at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. The Amols family lived in Irvington at the corner of Dows Lane and El Retiro Lane. The property abuts the Aqueduct path, as does the village's Memorial Park north of Dows Lane.

On April 8, 1968, title to the Croton Aqueduct lands in Westchester County passed from New York City to the Taconic State Park Commission, which, together with the State Council of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, was to create a development plan to determine the Aqueduct's eventual status and use within the state park system. There were already parking lots on the Aqueduct, including those north and south of Irvington's Main Street, built by permit from New York City. The *New York Times* (July 21, 1968) wrote: "Along the entire aqueduct, communities are debating the use of the property for parking lots, gardens, public buildings, grottoes and fountains, subject to approval..."

In 1964 Dr. Amols had written to the city's water supply agency that "this winding tract of land has long been a haven of nature lovers who enjoy hiking along its length" and that in the section next to his property and Memorial Park, recent automobile traffic had "virtually obliterated" the path and turned it into "little more than a sea of mud." A reply stated, in part: "In connection with hiking on Aqueduct land, this has never been authorized . . . and any such activity constitutes trespassing on City property."

When, in 1968, Irvington's Recreation Commission released a plan to build a New York City-approved, gravel parking lot for about 25 cars on the trail between Dows Lane

Public Hearing
on the
**CROTON
AQUEDUCT**

Monday, July 29
8 p.m.
Irvington High School

Held by
Hudson River Valley Commission

Battle!
The Village of Irvington
Plans to Build
A Parking Lot
on the
Croton Aqueduct!

All persons interested in
keeping the Aqueduct open
as a walkway are urged to
attend and make themselves
heard. Bring friends.

For information call LY 1-8588

This Advertisement Is Sponsored By
Croton Aqueduct Association
P.O. Box 372, Irvington, N.Y. 10533

Ad in Irvington Gazette, July 25, 1968.

and Memorial Park to serve the park's sports facilities, widespread opposition emerged, led by Dr. Amols. Questioning the effect of the weight of cars on the masonry structure beneath the trail, he proposed a ban on all traffic on the Aqueduct. Residents of other villages spoke out as well. In early July the Hudson River Valley Commission, headed by an environmentalist, Alexander Aldrich, announced a July 29 hearing on the parking plan.

On July 20 Bill Amols announced the formation of the Croton Aqueduct Association – planned since spring – with himself

(cont. on page 4)

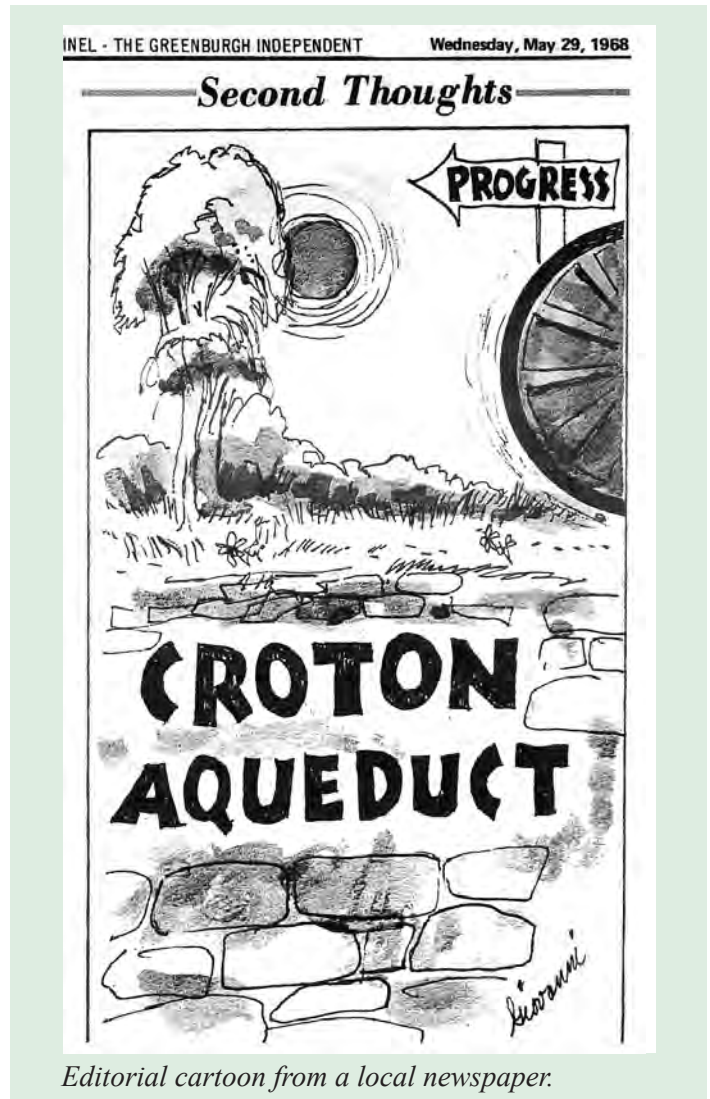
William & Jacqueline Amols *(cont. from page 3)*

as first president and, most strategically, Carl Carmer, nationally known author and historian and 30-year resident owner of Octagon House, as Advisory Council chairman. Reportedly the Association had 75 charter members. Organization supporters included the National Audubon Society, Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, and NY-NJ Trail Conference.

Building on Bill's natural bent for advocacy and publicity, and with the formidable assistance of Jacqueline Amols, opponents of the plan focused on recruiting a large turnout at the hearing. The press stated that a capacity crowd was expected, and reported Dr. Amol's mounting case against the plan. The Commission itself said the Irvington case could have "far wider implications" for all Aqueduct lands and similar resources in the Hudson Valley. On July 26, Irvington officials suspended the parking plan, its permit having been withdrawn by the Taconic Commission pending completion of a master plan for the Aqueduct. The hearing was canceled; the proposed parking was never built.

In subsequent months Dr. Amols continued his activism with state and local officials on behalf of the Aqueduct. A high point in raising public awareness came with a *New York Times* Travel section feature (Oct. 27, 1968) by reporter David Bird. It recounted the pleasures and mysteries of a two-day bike trip Bird had taken with Bill Amols in September from the Croton Dam to "journey's end" at High Bridge Tower in Manhattan.

In 1969 the Amols family moved to Cooperstown, where Bill – warm, imaginative, erudite, boundlessly energetic, and able "to impart humor on any subject" – continued his widely respected career in neurology and remained an active environmentalist. Jacqueline became a founder and the first president of Glimmerglass Opera.



Editorial cartoon from a local newspaper.

Note: I am deeply indebted to the late Jacqueline Amols and her daughter, Abigail, for access some time ago to the original press clippings and correspondence that are the source of the above account. – cf



Keeper's House Visitor and Education Center

15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY
between Broadway (Route 9) and Main St.

The historic house is adjacent to the Old Croton Aqueduct trail.

Winter Hours: Saturdays and Sundays through March 2018: Noon to 3pm.

The Keeper's House is an estimated 5- to 10-minute walk uphill from the Dobbs Ferry Station on Metro-North's Hudson Line Railroad. Service from Grand Central Terminal.

For more information call **914-693-4117**. In case of inclement weather, the house may be closed.

Daniel Shure, In Memoriam

With sadness we report the death on September 7, 2017, of Croton resident Daniel Shure, 58, Friends' board member since 2014. Daniel's property bordered the Aqueduct, where he walked his beloved dog, RJ, daily. He loved the trail and supported it in many ways, working on issues of safety, signage, and public awareness and representing the Friends on a regional trails committee related to the new Tappan Zee bridge. A stalwart supporter of the annual I Love My Park Day event, he also served as a docent at the Keeper's House Visitor Center and enjoyed leading rambles from the Croton-Harmon train station to the Croton Dam, with a friendly stop at his house for a break. We miss his insightful comments and quiet humor at board meetings. We have lost a valued colleague and good friend.



"Croton Water Celebration 1842." Sheet music cover for the "Croton Ode," sung at City Hall Park during the grand civic festivities on Oct. 14, 1842, marking completion of the Croton Aqueduct. Artist unknown. "As cannon roared at the Battery, the fountains at City Hall and Union Square rushed to life, and church bells pealed throughout the city." Some "quarter million people were either marching or watching the procession..." and sharing in the general exultation. (G. Koeppel, 2000.)



Photo Gallery • The spillway of the New Croton Dam. (Photo by C. Fahn)

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct
Keeper's House
15 Walnut Street
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage Paid
Permit 3038
White Plains, NY



Interim Newsletter Editor: Charlotte Fahn (czfahn1@gmail.com,
tel.: 914-478-3961, or by mail c/o the Friends).
Designer: Robert Romagnoli (RobertRCreative@nyc.rr.com)
©Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Inc., 2017

Join Us!

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

Members receive our newsletters. New members can choose
to receive our ☐ Westchester or ☐ NYC map at no charge.

☐ Renewal ☐ New Member

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeper \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Best Friend \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good Friend \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Retiree \$15 |

Added donation (thank you!): \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Tel. _____ Email _____

Please make checks payable to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Send with this
coupon to the Friends at Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

**For inquiries about Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic
Park** or to report trail conditions, call Historic Site Manager
Steven Oakes at 914-693-5259, or write to him at 15 Walnut
Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct is a
private, non-profit, volunteer organization
formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton
Aqueduct in Westchester County and New
York City. The Friends work to raise public
awareness of the Aqueduct and trail, and to se-
cure the resources that will enable this historic
greenway to remain unspoiled in perpetuity.
Tel.: 914-693-4117. *Website:* **aqueduct.org**

Board of Directors

Mavis Cain, *President*

Robert Kornfeld, Jr., *Vice-President*

Edward Brody, *Treasurer*

Elisa Zazzera, *Secretary-Membership*

John Flack, *Secretary-Meetings*

Diane Alden

Carl Grimm

Laura Compagni

Joseph Kozlowski

Douglas Emilio

Joanna Riesman

Charlotte Fahn

Thomas Tarnowsky

Ruth Gastel

Ildiko Viczian

Lesley Walter